Irony as a Zone of Confrontation between Different Voices/Voicings in Facebook Comments / *A ironia como zona de confronto entre diferentes vozes/dizeres em comentários do* Facebook

Andre Cordeiro dos Santos[*]
Girllaynne Gleyca Bezerra dos Santos Marques[**]
Siane Gois Cavalcanti Rodrigues[***]

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we propose to analyze if, and how, irony serves as a zone of dialogue and tension among different voices/voicings presented as discourses of feminist resistance. To this end, our concept of language is based on discussions developed by the Bakhtin Circle on irony as a discursive strategy as well as considerations about what is known as the rape culture and myths related to it. Our corpus is comprised of anonymous, ironic comments made by women on Facebook posts, on *spotted*[1] pages. The results of the data analysis show that, through the appropriation of the discursive-myths related to the culture of rape, women introduced, in their utterances, zones of tension between messages, characterizing irony as women's discourse of resistance against sexist discourse.

KEYWORDS: Irony; Sexist discursive-myths; Irony-feminist resistance

RESUMO

Neste artigo, partindo de discussões da ironia como estratégia discursiva, propomo-nos a analisar se, e como, a ironia serve de zona de diálogo e de tensão entre diferentes vozes/dizeres, evidenciando-se como um discurso de resistência da mulher. Para tanto, partimos do entendimento de linguagem do chamado Círculo de Bakhtin e das discussões sobre ironia como estratégia discursiva, além de considerações sobre a chamada cultura do estupro e os mitos a ela relacionados. Tomamos como corpus comentários de mulheres nos quais a ironia se faz presente, surgidos a partir de postagem anônima no Facebook*, em páginas do tipo* spotted*. A partir da análise dos dados, foi possível perceber que, por meio da apropriação dos discursos-mitos relacionados à cultura do estupro, as mulheres instauraram em seus enunciados zonas de tensão entre dizeres, caracterizando a ironia como discurso de resistência da mulher contra discursos machistas.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ironia; Discursos-mitos machistas; Ironia-resistência da mulher

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[*] Instituto Federal de Alagoas – Campus Piranhas / Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Faculdade de Letras, Maceió, Alagoas, Brazil; CAPES, Proc.1619951; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8760-192X; rdnao@hotmail.com

[**] Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Centro de Artes e Comunicação, Departamento de Letras, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6159-9606; girllaynne.marques@gmail.com

[***] Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Centro de Artes e Comunicação, Departamento de Letras, Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5263-2670; sianegois@yahoo.com.br

[1] Pages that customarily have anonymous posts.

Entering the Flow of Dialogue

We live in a world immersed in language - moreover, a world where language both exists and constitutes this world. This concept of language and the world has several implications in the ways our social reality is understood. An example of this is conferred by the fact that the social affirmation of the subject – which is also constituted through language – can only occur through language practices, providing the opportunity to socially interact in different discursive spaces (real or virtual) (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929]).[2] [3] Thus, through the understanding of language, the world and the subject, we can access ideologies in the world.

Considering this socio-dialogic understanding of language upheld by the Bakhtin Circle,[4] it is impossible to think about discursive practices outside of the social relations they establish, and, above all, outside of the relations of meaning that are established in them. In other words, it is impossible to think about language disregarding its dialogical relations. From this perspective, Voloshinov (1983a [1920];[5] 1973 [1929])[6] defends the ideological nature of language, with the understanding that ideology permeates utterances in all of their dimensions and specificities.

In this regard, in The Word and its Social Function, Voloshinov (1983b [1930], pp.139-152)[7] defends that, because of its socially and ideologically dialogic nature, in its own stylistic weight, "[…] the word becomes the arena for class struggle [or distinct social groups], the arena of dispute for differently directed class viewpoints and class interests" (p.145),[8] proving different evaluative points of view. In this excerpt, Voloshinov, by mentioning the issue regarding the very ideological and dialogical nature of the forms of language and, moreover, by giving evidence that it serves as an

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[2] TN: In Portuguese, the author's name is written in accordance to the spelling used by the Brazilian translators: Volochínov, as in Geraldi's translation (2013), and Volochínov, as in Grillo and Américo's translation (2017). This English version conforms to the spelling given by the English language translators, which will be used where previous English translations exit.

[3] VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Matejka and I. R.Titunik Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.

[4] The group of scholars formed by Bakhtin, Voloshinov, Medvedev, among others.

[5] VOLOSHINOV, V. What is language? Translated by Noel Owen. In: SHUKMAN, A. (Ed.). *Bakhtin School Papers*. Somerton, Oxford: Old School House, 1983a, pp.93-113.

[6] For reference, see footnote 3.

[7] VOLOSHINOV, V. The Word and its Social Function. Translated by Joe Andrew. In: SHUKMAN, A. (Ed.). *Bakhtin School Papers*. Somerton, Oxford: Old School House, 1983b, pp.139-152.

[8] For reference, see footnote 7.

arena for the encounter of different voices and points of view, brings to the discussion the possibility of the word (and the utterance) to take up several positions in a given situation. Thus, Voloshinov indicates that a dialogical play among different social voices is contained within the utterance and that it can support different discursive phenomena.

In light of this, it is possible to verify that the notions of language subjacent to this understanding is also "[…] *the product of man's collective activity and in all its elements it reflects both the economic and socio-political organization of the society that gave rise to it*" (VOLOSHINOV, 1983a [1930], p.101; emphasis in original).[9] This way, the word can become a meeting point for different ideologies and social voices, characterizing emotional-volitional moments in relation to given situations (BAKHTIN, 1993 [1919/20]).[10]

An example of this encounter of voices can be perceived through the discursive phenomenon of irony. Booth (1983), in *The Empire of Irony*, through a historical review of the phenomenon of irony, defends that, as an aesthetic principle, it creates sites of resistance and, therefore, can be seen as highly ideologized, by pretending to reconcile conflicting social values, gathering various social voices, thus, allowing the subjects to appropriate others' voices to ridicule them. In this process of voice appropriation, according to the author, it is possible to assume that the voices appropriated by the subjects, in this phenomenon of irony, will belong to other social groups, normally, opposing groups (ideologically), in some sense.

Corroborating this approach to irony, in the book *Ironia em perspectiva polifônica* [*Irony in a Polyphonic Perspective*], Brait (2008, p.140) defines this discursive strategy as a "[…] play between what the utterance says and the utterance implies with the intention of unmasking or subverting values, a process that necessarily relies on the involvement of the reader, the listener or the spectator."[11]

Considering these definitions of irony by Booth (1983) and Brait (2008), we can see that there are traces of the nature of language upheld by Voloshinov and outlined, in

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[9] For reference, see footnote 7.
[10] BAKHTIN, M. *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Translated by Vadim Liapunov. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1993.
[11] In the original: "[…] jogo entre o que o enunciado diz e a enunciação faz dizer, com objetivos de desmascarar ou subverter valores, processo que necessariamente conta com formas de envolvimento do leitor, ouvinte ou espectador."

general terms, above in this article. In other words, based on discussions regarding irony, we can consider that it is characterized as a space of dialogical-discursive relations (which can present relationships based on dialogue or tension) among the voicings of distinct social groups.

That being said, considering these discussions about language and irony, as well as the language practices that take place in interactions within virtual environments, the question arise: at what point does the irony present itself as an arena for dissenting opinions, for interests of different social groups, reflecting and refracting other social discourses? Thus, we decided to analyze if, and how, irony serves as a zone of dialogue and tension among different voices/voicings, showing itself as a voice of resistance by women. Consequently, we have the following specific objectives: to analyze dialogical marks of reflection and refraction regarding sexist discourses in commentaries by women and to analyze how an Other's voice is taken up, regardless of constituted opinion, using resistance-irony[12] in the utterance.

To achieve these objectives, we consider the issue of the diffusion of discourses that emerges from what is known as the "rape culture" and choose to analyze the comments that mention the male sexist discursive-myth[13] in relation to sexual crimes committed against women. We select as a *corpus* for this analysis a public Facebook post and its following comments, in which the phenomenon of irony is present. The choice to use this post as the corpus was due to the public access and because the post had great repercussion, especially among women, in the comment section, and it was widely shared on other social networks and communications apps.[14] Because it is a virtual space of public access, this post had several comments susceptible to analysis. However, due to the limited space imposed by the type of discourse we proposed to write about, we chose to analyze only five of them, although irony is present in a much larger number. It should be mentioned that, while the comments occurred in a public virtual space and there is unrestricted access to them, we opted to preserve the identity of those who wrote the comments. Regarding the post itself, it was made anonymously.

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[12] "Resistance-irony" is the discursive strategy that aims to contradict oppressive discourse through the use of irony.

[13] "Sexist discursive-myth" can be defined as the recurrent social position that attributes the blame of rape on a woman's behavior.

[14] This post, along with the comment section, went viral over WhatsApp (one of the authors of this article even received print screens of the post and the comments, from more than one group of which he is a member on the app).

For this study, we used some written works of Voloshinov, Bakhtin and other members of the Bakhtin Circle, about the social nature of language and the dialogical relations, as well as studies about irony as a discursive phenomenon, such as Booth's (1983) and Brait's (2008), among others. In addition, studies about patriarchal ideology, male sexist discourse, feminism and the culture of rape were considered since those issues are, in some sense, part of this paper.

With the general premises established, we take a deeper look into the concepts of language, used as a basis for this paper, presented in general terms, in the introduction.

1 The Social Concept of Language: Dialogism as a Basic Principle of Discursive Interaction

To achieve the objectives of this paper and answer our research questions, the we have fashioned a theoretical framework based on a socio-dialogical concept of language originating with the Bakhtin Circle, as it considers the extraverbal dimension of language – the social conditions of utterance -, which is indispensable to the comprehension of irony as a linguistic-discursive process of a clash of ideologies and different voices. Thus, we present a brief discussion on some aspects of this understanding of language.

The Bakhtin Circle advocated, in the early 20th century, a socio-Marxist[15] approach to language, which was able to account for extra-linguistic issues. This new way of seeing language brought several concerns to the Circle's list of studies, which at that time had largely been ignored, regarding, above all, its ideological nature. This social concept of language emerges in Vološinov's criticism (1973 [1929])[16] of two mainstream linguistic-philosophical concepts widely accepted during the early 20th century. These were *Abstract Objectivism* and *Individualistic/Idealistic Subjectivism.*

For Vološinov (1973 [1929]), *abstract objectivism* focuses on the "[…] *the linguistic system as a system of the phonetic, grammatical, and lexical forms of*

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[15] For Fanini (2015, p.19), the Circle started a new discussion about Marxism, because, according to the author, Russian scholars, going against the hegemonic tradition of work centrality, emphasize the ability of language to shape nature in the constitution of the social being in its first instances.
[16] For reference, see footnote 3.

language" (p.52; emphasis in original).[17] Thus, for the scholar, this first tendency of linguistic-philosophical thinking holds the idea that: "Language stands before the individual as an inviolable, incontestable norm which the individual, for his part, can only accept" (p.53).[18] The main representative of this trend is Saussure and, for Vološinov (1973 [1929]),[19] the mistake of this trend was to leave out the social aspect.

On the other hand, the *Individualistic/Idealistic Subjectivism*, according to Vološinov (1973 [1929]),[20] focuses on utterance understood as "something which, having in some way taken shape and definition in the psyche of an individual, is outwardly objectified for others with the help of external signs of some kind" (p.84);[21] it means that the most relevant point are the individual-psychological relationships of the speaker. This perspective of language study examines phenomena from the interior to the exterior and, notably, the exterior is only seen as relevant as a container that does not affect the formation and constitution of the utterance. The main representative of this perspective is Vossler and, although Voloshinov (1983c [1930]), in the essay On the borders between poetics and linguistics,[22] acknowledged that this perspective represents progress in relation to *abstract objectivism*, because it highlights the creative character of the isolated utterance, the author (1973 [1929])[23] defends that this trend's greatest mistake was also to leave out considerations of the social aspect as a constitutive part of the utterance.

Given the criticism towards both perspectives, Vološinov (1973 [1929])[24] proposes a new one, which considers issues of social order as a constitutive part of language. This concept is based on the following propositions: the sign system alone, cannot handle the reality of language phenomena; language is a phenomenon in a continuous process and this process becomes effective through interaction; linguistic laws of evolution are sociological; a language's creativity is connected to ideological

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[17] For reference, see footnote 3.
[18] For reference, see footnote 3.
[19] For reference, see footnote 3.
[20] For reference, see footnote 3.
[21] For reference, see footnote 3.
[22] TN: The English version of On the Borders of poetics and linguistics is inaccessible.
[23] For reference, see footnote 3.
[24] For reference, see footnote 3.

values and this creativity originates from social necessity; and utterance is purely social/ideological (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929], p.98).[25]

With this thesis, utterance is understood as the ideal unit of language and, in it, different issues are now considered, because it considers the verbal and the extraverbal. The *verbal* element corresponds to the "intonation," the "word selection" and its "disposition in the utterance's interior" (VOLOSHINOV, 1983d [1930], p.126);[26] the *extraverbal* part corresponds to the "situation" (which entails space and time, the object or subject and the speakers' attitude towards events [p.124]) and to the "audience" (VOLOSHINOV, 1983d [1930]).[27]

When we focus on the verbal language materialized in utterances, the issue regarding its social nature is a determining factor. At this point, it is relevant to remember and to reinforce that, in the Circle's view, language as instance of speech is formed from a linguistic system (partly immanent), of language as system in a Saussurean sense. However, in the verbal interaction, language as system alone cannot account for the full scope of language as speech and, therefore, in the verbal-discursive interaction, several dialogic relations are constructed with different instances of utterance, without which communication would not be possible (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929]).[28] These relations are the dialogical relations.

Bakhtin (1986 [1934/35])[29] acknowledges that language is also socially constructed, but it is of an immanent order, reiterative and, because of that, less susceptible to change, constituting the "centripetal forces" (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.271).[30,31] In this case, Bakhtin (1986 [1952/53], p.67)[32] affirms that by distinguishing the sentence from the utterance, in the language-as-system, logical relations are

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[25] For reference, see footnote 3.
[26] VOLOSHINOV, V. The Construction of the Utterance. Translated by Noel Owen. In: SHUKMAN, A (Ed.). *Bakhtin School papers*. Somerton. Oxford: Old School House, 1983d, pp.114-13
[27]. For reference, see footnote 26.
[28] For reference, see footnote 3.
[29] BAKHTN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: BAKHTN, M. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern W. McGee. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1986.
[30]BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. In: BAKHTIN, M. *The Dialogic Imagination*: Four Essays by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981.
[31] For the Circle, there are centripetal forces in language that are responsible for keeping the language's stability. These forces are of an immanent order, repeatable, which is shared among the speakers. There are, opposed to these, centrifugal forces, which refer to the unrepeatable, to the individual and always new.
[32] For reference, see footnote 29.

established. However, in the instance-of-language,[33] dialogical relations are the motors, materialized in units of verbal interaction, in utterances.

Thus, from the Circle's studies, according to Santos (2015), it is evident that in the plane of the utterance, dialogue between utterances can be evidenced by: social orientation to others; the presence of different social voices creating dialogue or conflict; the materialization of utterance as the bond between what is previously mentioned and the presumption of answers; adaptation of the utterance in different contexts; and of the subject's marks of the evaluative/emotionally-volitional/axiological in relation to the object of utterance.

From this perspective, we confer Vološinov's (1973 [1929])[34] affirmation that, "[…] countless ideological threads running through all areas of social intercourse" (p.19) and that "[…] the forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction" (p.21). In the author's line of thought, the utterances, leaving human history behind, not only reflect, but also refract, all phenomena of social life (VOLOSHINOV, 1983c [1930]).[35] Given this, we depart from the reflection and the refraction of social life and go on to the analysis of irony, because, in our view, it is constituted through this process.

Our gaze with regard to the phenomenon of irony is focused on the consideration over these issues about language and about dialogic marks that are evidenced by it. Before, however, we bring irony into the discussion, understanding it as a discursive phenomenon. We proceed with this discussion in the following section.

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[33]Russian does not have two words to represent 'language' as a system, and as an 'instance.' Both are expressed by a lexeme (*язык*). However, we use "language-as-system" and "instance-of-language" in the text to refer to these different concepts: the former refers to the systemic part of language; the latter refers to a wider sense and is constituted by the union of extra-verbal and social-ideological matters towards the linguistic system; the latter concerns interaction.

[34] For reference, see footnote 3.

[35] See footnote 22.

2 Irony as an Evaluating Edge and Discursive Strategy

To talk about the discursive phenomenon of irony, initially, we must carry out an historical recollection of the studies on this matter, even if briefly, to concentrate our attentions on their discursive dimension.

The first appearance of the term irony dates back to the Classical Period, under the Greek term *eironeia*, by Plato (1968),[36] in *The Republic*, used as a discursive strategy employed by Socrates in his maieutic method.[37] For Plato, Socrates employed a rhetorical device he called ironic questioning during philosophical debates as a way to lead his opponents to contradiction and ridiculousness, by questioning them using their own assertions. In this context, according to Miotti (2010, p.119), in a paper that investigates laughter, the term irony could be understood as "the act of asking, while pretending to ignore."[38]

In this first circumstance, the nature of irony as a discursive strategy has already been defined, consolidating its position under the term "Socratic irony," or better still, the "Socratic question." Therefore, it is understandable that Socratic irony worked in ways to avoid the dogmatical and to question the value system proposed by its opposers, by leading them to contradiction, without, however, assuming the risks of an explicit questioning. This occurs, as Hutcheon (1994)[39] clarifies in her work, *Irony's Edge: Political Theory of Irony*, because of its inferential nature can be, simultaneously, dissimulation and communication.

Around the middle of the 19th century, in the context of German Romanticism, the concept of irony re-emerges as an unforeseen event, thus provoking a new reflection about the ironic occurrence, including it as a language phenomenon supported by the observation of life or even as a cosmic phenomenon. In this regard, according to Booth (1983), through his historical review of irony, two main unfolding events are developed from the dialogue between these conceptions: on the one hand, the German romantics made use of irony as a way of conveying the randomness of human fate; on the other

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[36] PLATO. *The Republic of Plato*. Translated by Allan Bloom. New York: Harper Collins, 1968.
[37] A method developed by Socrates, which consists of a philosophical practice, whereby questions posed about a certain topic lead the interlocutor to discover the truth about something.
[38] In the original: "a ação de perguntar fingindo ignorar."
[39] HUTCHEON, L. *Irony's Edge*: The Theory and Politics of Irony. London: Routledge, 1994.

hand, irony is transformed into an aesthetic principle of resistance, proving to be discursively productive by pretending to reconcile conflicting values.

This same comprehension of irony as an attempt at the conciliation between conflicting values is shared by Voloshinov (1983e [1926])[40] and it acts as a point of departure to a specific reflection about the issue proposed in the essay Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics. In this text, the scholar advocates that language in life has the same nature as language in art and, in this interim, specifically mentions irony's place within these intersections. Voloshinov (1983e [1926])[41] considers that, generally, the author and listener establish themselves as allies in relation to the intonation given to the object of discourse. However, at times, this might not occur, defining the discourse as controversial in which "the most eminent form of expression" is irony. According to the author, irony "is in general conditioned by social conflict. It is a meeting in one voice of two embodied evaluations, and their interferences and interruptions" (VOLOSHINOV, 1983e [1926], p.25).[42]

The definition of irony as a reciprocal interference of value judgement also arises within the theory of irony proposed by Hutcheon (1994),[43] which also problematizes her approach based on the notion of literal and figurative meaning. The author adopts the concepts of 'said' and 'unsaid' meanings to reflect on irony and arguments that arise from the interference between them, conceivng the 'said' as something explicitly outlined and the 'unsaid' as the attitude of the one holding irony before the discourse outlined, which is similar to Voloshinov's (1983e [1926])[44] notions of intonation.

In addition, Hutcheon defends that the ironic instance necessarily occurs in the enunciative dimension of language, such that "discourses are forms of social practice, of interaction between participants in particular situations" (1994, p.86).[45] Hence, the theory developed by the author about irony and its political nature encapsulates two main argumentation: firstly, that irony is an event and, secondly, that irony always

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[40] VOLOSHINOV, V. Discourse in Life and Discourse in Poetry: Questions of Sociological Poetics. Translated by John Richmond. In: SHUKMAN, A. (Ed.). *Bakhtin School Papers.* Somerton, Oxford: Old School House, 1983e, pp.5–30.
[41] For reference, see footnote 40.
[42] For reference, see footnote 40.
[43] For reference, see footnote 39.
[44] For reference, see footnote 40.
[45] For reference, see footnote 39.

represents an attitude, particularly about extensively sharp evaluations, named by the author as "evaluative edge" (pp.2, 61, 74, 85, 86, 91).[46] Therefore, Hutcheon (1994) maintains that "[t]he 'ironic' meaning is not, then, simply the unsaid meaning, and the unsaid is not always a simple inversion or opposite of the said [...]: it is always different—other than and more than the said" (p.13);[47] on the contrary, "[...] [w]ith irony, there are, instead, dynamic and plural relations among the text or utterance (and its context), the so-called ironist, the interpreter, and the circumstances surrounding the discursive situation" (p.11).[48]

As previously mentioned, irony is a discursive strategy, its plot is built mainly on the pillar of dissimulation and its generic function defined by the imprecise, dubious outline, of the relation between the expresser and the expression. This imprecision becomes comfortable from the ironist's standpoint once he becomes "extremely hard to assail precisely because it is virtually impossible to fix her or his text convincingly" (MOI, 1985, p.40 *apud* HUTCHEON, 1994, p.35).[49] For this reason, irony is a strategic mechanism so that people can express themselves inside a system they judge to be offensive and oppressive (HUTCHEON, 1994, p.35),[50] allowing "a speaker to address remarks to a recipient which the latter will understand quite well, be known to understand, know that he is known to understand; and yet neither participant will be able to hold the other responsible for what has been understood" (GOFFMAN, 1974, p.515 *apud* HUTCHEON, 1994, p.82).[51]

This way, the double arguments of irony are not set only in the eyelevel of ironic significance, between what the utterance says and what it indicates, but composes itself as the engine that makes the ironic utterance possible, since, considering that the attitude of the unsaid is reliant on what was said, it is essential that, for the effectiveness of ironic signification, said and unsaid can coexist within the enunciation, in resonance with Hutcheon's proposition (1994).[52]

From there, it is possible to think of irony as an event that articulates two dimensions intimately connected, as did Brait (2008) in her book *Ironia em perspectiva*

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[46] For reference, see footnote 39.
[47] For reference, see footnote 39.
[48] For reference, see footnote 39.
[49] For reference, see footnote 39.
[50] For reference, see footnote 39.
[51] For reference, see footnote 39.
[52] For reference, see footnote 39.

polifônica [*Irony in a Polyphonic Perspective*]. The first refers to the dimension of interaction between the ironic interlocuters, the utterance and the interpreter. The author (2008, p.142) considers the ironic utterances "necessarily as text, that is, as a unit of meaning, as a contextualized dimension,"[53] since irony, just as every discursive manifestation, is a language activity, built in a constitutive way in interdiscursivity. Thus, irony "[…] configures a structure that, in some way, depends on the contextual refence, which eliminates the possibility of understanding irony solely at the sentence level" (BRAIT, 2008, p.142).[54] This stance has become a keystone in the redefinition of irony as a subject matter, which, in the Classical Period was limited to the perspective of figures of speech.

The second dimension refers to the interaction between the said and the unsaid, that is, the dimension of the "play between what the speaker says and what the utterance indicates, with the aim of unmasking or subverting values, a process that necessarily relies on the involvement of the reader, listener or spectator" (BRAIT, 2008, p.140).[55] This assumption of ironic meaning arises in Brait's theoretical proposition through the notion of inter-discourse as formulated and developed within Bakhtinian studies, with the notions of dialogism and polyphony[56] being key to endorse his theoretical apparatus.

The notion of dialogism is articulated on the reflection about irony in relation to its dependence on context, on other sayings, by clarifying fundamental aspects of the ironic event, particularly related to otherness. This is because irony can be used as a strategy that anticipates the interlocutors' answers, being especially used as a way to soften belligerent responses. Brait (2008), in her reflections, adopts notions such as ruptures and anticipations of values to argue about the efficiency of irony in environments of conflict in which irony acts as some sort of *counter-discourse*, being able to dislocate and eliminate the dominant representation of the world, a process of great importance when the established discourse has a broad capacity to absorb.

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[53] In the original: "necessariamente como texto, isto é, como unidade de significação, como dimensão contextualizada."
[54] In the original: "[…] configura uma estrutura que, de alguma forma, depende da referência contextual, o que elimina a possibilidade de compreender a ironia unicamente no nível da frase."
[55] In the original: "jogo entre o que o enunciado diz e a enunciação faz dizer, com objetivos de desmascarar ou subverter valores, processo que necessariamente conta com formas de envolvimento do leitor, ouvinte ou espectador."
[56] The polyphonic aspect is not addressed here as it is beyond the scope of this paper. However, for Brait (2008), the polyphonic irony is caused by the articulation, in a text, of two utterances that evoke discourses from loosely related fields of human activity. It is through this articulation that irony structures itself and occurs.

The absorptive capacity of dominant discourses dialogues with the second aspect developed by Brait, still related to the notion of the dialogic, that is, the dialogue that the ironic discourse establishes with the dominant discourses, which the author addresses through interdiscursivity. On this specific point, the ironic utterance makes use of precedent discourses, turning them into objects of its own discourse. For Brait, irony structures itself through the friction between two or more antagonistic discourses, in which the "[…] play, established between a text and the constitutive presences in its interior, is articulated ironically by the use of several strategies of discursive incorporation, of already-said re-creation" (BRAIT, 2008, pp.140-141).[57] However, Brait warns that:

> the ways the already-said are recuperated for ironic purposes do not assume, as such, an erudite function, in the sense of invoking authority or even less as simple decoration. On the contrary, they are ways of contesting authority, of subversion of established values that, through inter-discursivity, institute and qualify the subject of the utterance, while disqualifying specific elements (2008, p.141).[58]

Accordingly, the play of irony with the dominant discourses proves to be very efficient, insofar as it allows the ironic discourse to take up space (to be permitted and heard, even if not understood) as well as to relativize the authority and stability of the dominant discourse.

Having now presented the discussion on the discursive phenomenon of irony, next we shall move to the discussion concerning some aspects regarding the patriarchal culture, rape culture and the myths associated to it.

3 Patriarchalism, "Rape Culture" and Mythic-Voicings

In the discussion carried out on the phenomenon of irony, other discussions bear the same relevance to the objectives drawn from the current investigation, namely:

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[57] In the original: "[…] jogo, que se estabelece entre um texto e as presenças constitutivas de seu interior, articula-se ironicamente por meio de várias estratégias de incorporação discursiva, de encenação do já-dito."

[58] In the original: "as formas de recuperação do já-dito com objetivo irônico não assumem, como tal, a função de erudição, no sentido de invocação de autoridade e muito menos de simples ornamento. Ao contrário, são formas de contestação da autoridade, de subversão dos valores estabelecidos que, pela interdiscursividade, instauram e qualificam o sujeito da enunciação, ao mesmo tempo em que desqualificam determinados elementos."

gender relation (specifically womens' position relative to men in our society), the patriarchal ideology with its implications and, also, rape culture (with the myth-voicings associated to it).

To address these issues, we highlight the notion of patriarchalism, as defined by Barreto (2004), in a text where she made a historical retrospective of the relationship between patriarchalism and feminism, with a set of structural ideologies of current society that determine the places men and women should occupy, with women always being subjugated to men. In the words of the author, patriarchalism

> [i]s characterized by an institutionally imposed authority, of men over women and children in the family environment, permeating the entire societal organization, from production and consumption, politics, to legislation and culture (BARRETO, 2004, p.64).[59]

Still according to the author, this model of society that subjugates women, has been contested by social movements that aim to transform and raise the awareness of women. For Barreto, Feminism is one of the major leaders of these movements. It was created and led mainly by women who fight for gender equality and, thus, have been making women subject of struggles for equality in every single aspect of their lives (BARRETO, 2004, p.73).

On contemplating the resistance movement by women in the fight for equality, we cannot help but think about how patriarchal ideology has been reproduced. Regarding this issue, according to Nascimento (2014, p.297), who carried out a study on the division of toys between boys and girls within the reproduction of patriarchal ideology, the patriarchal discourse has enveloped individuals from childhood on, through a "training" that guides boys and girls to take up different social roles according to their gender and, in this case, the role designated to girls is always inferior to the boys.

Considering the author's affirmation, it is possible to assume that what is defined as feminine and masculine is, in fact, internalized through a culture that differentiates men and women, attributing social values to the members of each one of these groups. According to Nascimento (2014, p.298), "[c]hildren receive a sexist education that, in

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[59] In the original: "É caracterizado por uma autoridade imposta institucionalmente, do homem sobre mulheres e filhos no ambiente familiar, permeando toda organização da sociedade, da produção e do consumo, da política, à legislação e à cultura."

addition to differentiating men from women, it transforms differences into social inequalities naturalized as something that has been biologically defined."[60]

Contemplating a context that is highly penetrated and defined by the patriarchal culture in which women live, Sousa (2017) investigates some mechanisms responsible for promoting violence against women, specifically violence from rape. In the text, *Cultura do estupro:* práticas e incitações à violência sexual contra a mulher [*Rape Culture:* Practices and Incitements to Sexual Violence against Women], she talks about a series of physical, psychological and symbolic acts of violence of sexual nature pertaining to rape culture. For this author (p.10), the use of this denomination has serious implications that demands social attention, because defining social practices as a culture implies, necessarily, its occurrence to be naturalized and continuous.

With that, it is clear that the author aims to raise awareness about the frequency of sexual crimes, mostly against women, being committed in our society, because, according to the author, in different ways, it is macho culture that has encouraged the perpetuation of this form of violence. Besides that, in several cases, the rapist acts, precisely, reinforced by the discourses that are transmitted "[....] to them, and through them, by a wide variety of forms" (SOUSA, 2017, p.12).[61] Notably, the researcher focuses on the process of the perpetuation of sexist discourse that contributes to situating women, more often than not, as the victim of such crimes. By observing the emphasis given by the author to the perpetuation of sexual violence, it is important to notice that language (discourse) is the main form of perpetuation.

In relation to these socially recurrent discourses, they find support in the idea that power is always in the hands of men, and consequently, it is seen as his right to make use of it in whatever way he wishes or judges to be necessary (SOUSA, 2017, p.13). Therefore, we have a set of values, socially and historically constructed, that works to the detriment of women, seeing that, according to the author, through social voices, values related to machismo are perpetuated, re-victimizing women, who are generally blamed for putting themselves in risky situations.

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[60] In the original: "As crianças recebem uma educação sexista que, além de diferenciar homens e mulheres, transforma diferenças em desigualdades sociais naturalizadas como sendo algo definido biologicamente."

[61] In the original: "[...] até eles, e por meio deles, das mais variadas formas."

From the social practice of re-victimizing woman for a crime she is the victim of, we observe the emergence of deterministic discourses about rules women should follow to be less susceptible to rape. These rules generally indicate the clothes size women should wear, what type of makeup they should put on, how they should behave on the streets, when and how to drink, appropriate hours to go out, what places to go to, etc., putting on women the other's responsibility of a crime against their own sexual integrity (SOUSA, 2017).

Regarding the myth-voicings, exposed by the author, they are related to sexual crimes against women, which end up victimizing women over a crime she suffered against her integrity. For example, it is common to hear social discourses that encourage men to seize every opportunity to consummate the sexual act, because the possibility of a rejection by a woman would be, in fact, the reflex of the teachings that women should not say 'yes' at the first attempt and, thereby, it would be the man's responsibility to revert this situation (SOUSA, 2017, p.13).

In the author's conception, these would be the values passed on from generation to generation, reproducing the discourse that subjugates women, which allows us to define rape culture as symbolic violence that legitimizes and, in a way, stimulates sexual crimes against women.

In light of this outlook that socially presents itself to women, it is essential to consider some issues. According to Souza (2017), "[w]hen someone has their car stolen, there is no questioning about how it was handled before the robbery" (p.16);[62] however, in cases of rape, things are different: it is not enough to confirm the act was consummated; a verification of the history of the alleged victim is done and her reputation is considered; and only then might she get registered as a victim, because being considered a rape victim "is a social status based on her reputation" (p.16).[63]

Besides that, another myth that is imposed when discussing the matter of rape is opposed to what is advised to a robbery victim – not to react; from a rape victim the opposite is expected. That is, it is expected "not to only to bravely resist, but to show

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[62] In the original: "[q]uando alguém tem um carro roubado, não se indaga sobre como lidava com o objeto antes do roubo."
[63] In the original: "é um status social condicionado à reputação."

evidence on her skin, the scars from the act of violence endured" (SOUSA, 2017, p.18).[64]

In addition, related to the matter of rape, there are several other myths, such as the one that implies the crime may be the fruit of the victim's imagination, which, according to Sousa (2017), is very common in the cases where the victim is a child.

> A child victim of rape, many times, is questioned to the point of exhaustion about the reality of the facts, or if it is not merely an invention or misinterpretation of some ambiguous gesture from an adult (SOUSA, 2017, p.19).[65]

The myth-voicings don't stop there: the victim's deposition against someone who is well-known tend to be muffled in order to avoid 'destroying the rapist's life,' who is often seen as a 'family person' and well-regarded member of society, in some cases even being considered a victim of the situation (SOUSA, 2017, p.19).

Therefore, as the author indicates, it is necessary to consider that in today's society the victim and the aggressor are idealized. For the rape victim, strict and often intangible criteria are imposed before being registered properly. For the aggressor, the image conveyed is that of a "[...] beast that lurks around in a dark alley, waiting for the opportunity to fulfill his desire" (SOUSA, 2017, p.22).[66]

Furthermore, the rapist is often characterized as "a subject with aggressive and suspicious behavior who attacks his victims by surprise" (p.22),[67] thus promoting the idea that rape occurs due to the carelessness of the victim, walking alone at night, making herself an easy target for the rapist, rather than putting the responsibility exclusively on the aggressor (SOUSA, 2017, p.22).

In this way, the mythic-discourse that this crime against women's sexual integrity occurs mainly due to the victim's negligence regarding her own safety is

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[64] In the original: "não só resista bravamente, mas que traga em sua pele as marcas da violência sofrida."

[65] In the original: "A criança vítima de estupro muitas vezes é questionada à exaustão sobre a certeza da realidade dos fatos, ou se não se trata apenas de uma invenção ou má interpretação de algum gesto mais ambíguo que tenha partido do adulto."

[66] In the original: "[…] bestial que fica na espreita de um beco escuro, esperando pela oportunidade de levar a cabo o seu desejo."

[67] In the original: "um sujeito de comportamento agressivo e suspeito que ataca suas vítimas de assalto."

reproduced, creating "[…] the conception that certain behaviors, clothes, gestures, etc. make the women who display them potential rape victims" (SOUSA, 2017, pp.22-23).[68]

Given these mythic-discourses, it is remarkable, as in Sousa (2017), that, in no way, the violence against women can or should be justified, as society has the responsibility to move toward gender equality.

In light of the discussion about rape, the reasons behind the conflicts between feminists and society become clear, regarding the understanding of what rape is, who the rapists are, and how such a condemned crime can be so commonplace (SOUSA, 2017, p.24).

From this discussion we can conclude that the violence to which women are submitted is a reflex of sexist discourses supported by patriarchal ideology. And, considering that the social network has become a stage of confrontation between these mythic-discourses and resistances discourses, in the following section we will focus on the phenomenon of irony, by believing that it gives space to discursive conflicts that demonstrated discourses from women that seek to resist to impositions and myths from the rape culture and ideologies attached to it.

4 Analysis of the Discursive Phenomenon of Irony: Ideological Clashes in the Comment Section of Facebook

This section presents the analysis of the dialogic and/or tense relationships in different utterances, in light of the issues discussed in the previous sections – the dynamics of the dialogical nature of language and the discursive phenomenon of irony. Our *corpus* of analysis is comprised of one *Facebook* post and some of the comments made about it, in which the sexist mythic-discourses related to the rape of women are utilized to configure irony.
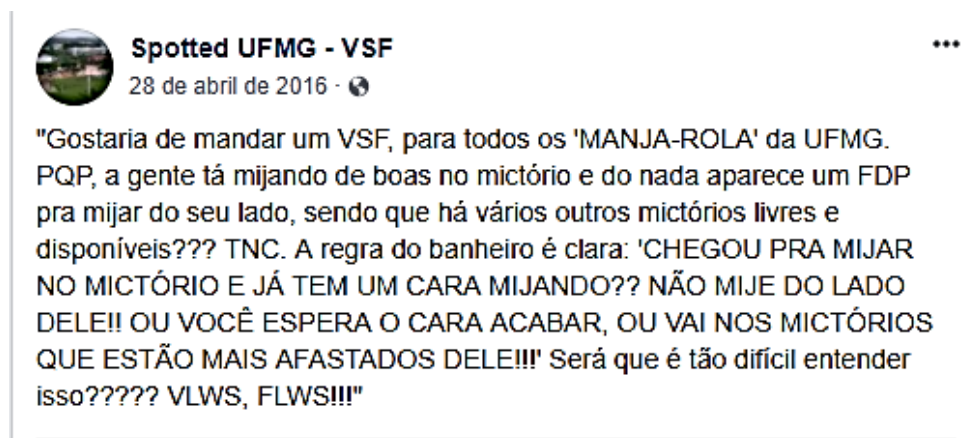
To analyze these comments made by female readers of the page, it is necessary to understand the context in which they emerge. The comments are related to a post in the *Spotted UFMG – VFS* [69] page, where the anonymous authors are able to send a VSF

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[68] In the original: ""[…] a concepção de que determinados comportamentos, roupas, gestos, etc. fazem da mulher que os utiliza uma vítima potencial para o ato do estupro."

[69] This page, according to the creator's description, emerged from the acknowledgement that it is not only love that drives the Federal University of Minas Gerais, but also disagreements. Thus, this page was

(acronym of the Portuguese – Vai Se Fuder -- meaning 'Go Fuck Yourself') to people and/or situations at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). These types of pages are characterized precisely by the author's anonymity. The following screen shot presents the post that generated the comments made by the women:

Spotted UFMG - VSF
28 de abril de 2016 · 🌐

"Gostaria de mandar um VSF, para todos os 'MANJA-ROLA' da UFMG. PQP, a gente tá mijando de boas no mictório e do nada aparece um FDP pra mijar do seu lado, sendo que há vários outros mictórios livres e disponíveis??? TNC. A regra do banheiro é clara: 'CHEGOU PRA MIJAR NO MICTÓRIO E JÁ TEM UM CARA MIJANDO?? NÃO MIJE DO LADO DELE!! OU VOCÊ ESPERA O CARA ACABAR, OU VAI NOS MICTÓRIOS QUE ESTÃO MAIS AFASTADOS DELE!!!' Será que é tão difícil entender isso????? VLWS, FLWS!!!"

Figure 1: *Facebook*[70] publication[71]

Clearly, the textual markers and the content of the post indicate a man sending a "VSF" to other men who might be looking at his penis while he is using the urinal at UFMG. This post generated a series of comments from women who, dialogically, answered him by reflecting and refracting sexist social discourses (VOLOSHINOV, 1983c [1930];[72] BAKHTIN, 1981 [1934-35])[73] in relation to the culture of rape – the mythic-voicings as previously discussed (SOUSA, 2017).

The first comment analyzed dialogically answers the post, highlighting the dialogic marks of utterance (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929];[74] SANTOS, 2015), through a

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created to provide a space in which people from the university can send a "VSF" (acronym meaning 'go fuck yourself' in Portuguese) to people and/or situations of the same university, anonymously.

[70] To help comprehend the meanings of the post, the abbreviations are explained. In Portuguese: VSF stands for 'go fuck yourself'; PQP means 'for fuck's sake'; FDP means 'son of a bitch'; TNC means 'obviously'; VLWS is an abbreviation for 'thanks everyone'; and FLWS is an abbreviation for 'see ya.'

[71] Our translation into English: "I would like to send a VSF, to all the 'COCK-LOVERS' of UFMG. PQP, we are peeing in the urinal and out of nowhere an FDP shows up to pee right next to you, when there are several other free urinals??? TNC. Bathroom rules are clear: 'YOU GET THERE TO PEE IN THE URINAL AND THERE'S ALREADY A GUY PEEING?? DO NOT PEE NEXT TO HIM!! YOU WAIT FOR THE GUY TO FINSH OR USE THE URINALS THAT ARE FURTHEST FROM HIM!!!' Is that so hard to understand????? VLWS, FLWS!!!"

[72] See footnote 22.

[73] For reference, see footnote 30.

[74] For reference, see footnote 3.

relation of dialogue and tension with regard to the originating-discourse (BAKHTIN, 1981 [1934-35]):[75]
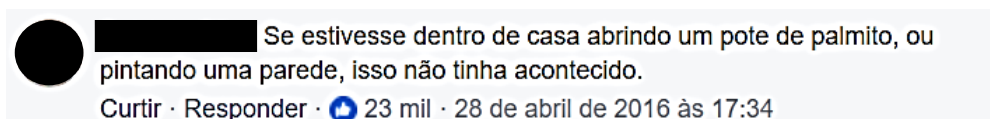
Figure 2: Comment 1[76]

Notably, in the comment above, reader 1 appropriates the discourse of the other (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929][77]; BAKHTIN, 1981 [1934-35])[78] – in this case, from the sexist discourse related to rape culture, by saying that if the man had been inside the house, opening a jar of hearts of palm or painting a wall (jobs relegated to 'men'), this would not have happened, thereby mocking the situation. Clearly, reader 1 invokes the mythic-voicings that posit women are raped because they have put themselves in risky situations (SOUZA, 2017), while they should have been at home, taking care of domestic chores (women's work), tasks that would have been attributed and passed on to them since childhood (NASCIMENTO, 2014). By appropriating this sexist mythic-voicing and refracting it to comment on a situation that had occurred to a man, as a woman reader 1 dialogically presented the inconsistencies of this sexist discourse in the constitution of her utterance. Thus, she establishes, in her enunciation, a position of resistance towards it (BOOTH, 1983; BRAIT, 2008).

In the following comment, from reader 2, once again, there is a case of appropriation of the alien discourse with sexist content, as a strategy to produce irony.
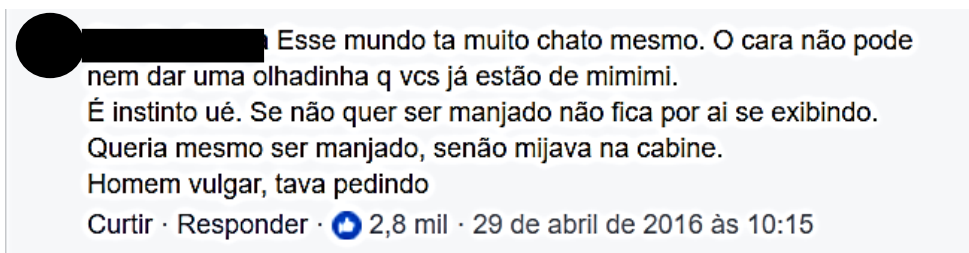
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[75] For reference, see footnote 30.
[76] Our translation into English: "If you had been in your house opening a jar of hearts of palm, or painting a wall, this wouldn't have happened."
[77] For reference, see footnote 3.
[78] For reference, see footnote 30.

Figure 3: Comment 2[79]

Reader 2's comments dialogically reflect and refract (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929])[80] the discourse that harassment suffered by women is trivial. In addition, the reader also reflects and refracts the mythic-voicing that male attitudes that lead them to behaviors considered harassing are due to biological instinct and the sexist discourse that women who are harassed bring it on themselves because they are vulgar, constantly exposing themselves, almost as if they were asking to be harassed; otherwise, they would not put themselves in situations where this type of harassment can occur (SOUZA, 2017)

Once again, by reader 2's appropriation of the discourses of which she is not the prototypical subject[81] (the prototypical subject would be a man), the reader presents a semantic clash within the utterance that contests the sexist discourse.

In the following comment, reader 3 reflects and refracts one of the myths related to rape, highlighted by Sousa (2017), through her questioning of the veracity of the event and simultaneously warning that the "victim" could ruin the "harasser's" reputation.

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[79] Our translation into English: "This world is really boring. A guy can't even sneak a peek and you start bitching. It's instinct, c'mon. If you don't want to be checked out, don't walk around exposing yourself. You wanted to be stared at; otherwise, you would have peed in the stall. Man slut, you were asking for it."

[80] For reference, see footnote 3.

[81] We use this term to refer to the fact that these discourses are generally attributed to men, although we recognize that women can also reproduce the same sexist discourses. But this is not the case, for the reader's intention was to mock the anonymous author of the post.
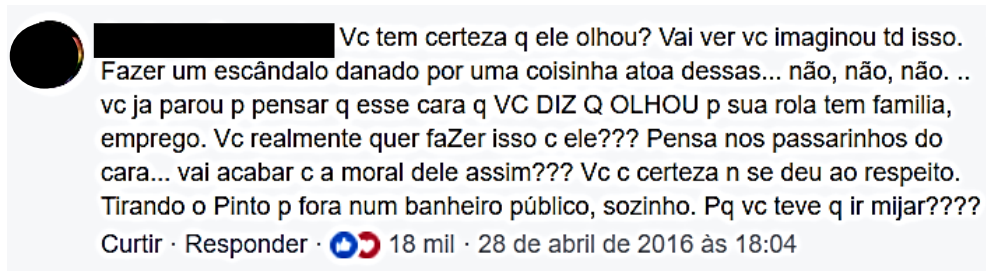
Figure 4: Comment 3[82]

This comment clearly reproduces, ironically, the myth that the victim's deposition should be silenced so as not to "destroy the rapist's life," who is presented as a respectable person in society and a family man; he is even considered a "victim" of this situation (SOUSA, 2017. p.19). The reader even claims that this could be a consequence of the "victim's" own recklessness. Had the "victim" given himself enough respect? That is, the question of reputation, once again, is confronted (BRAIT, 2008). Thus, in the appropriation of sexist mythic-voicings, reader 3, being a woman, a non-prototypical subject of the discourse reflected and refracted, also creates a zone of tension, through irony, establishing a place of resistance against oppressive discourses (BOOTH, 1983; HUTCHEON, 1994;[83] BRAIT, 2008).

In reader 4's comment, there is the questioning of the victim's reputation, reflecting and refracting the discourse that the rape victim's status is conditioned by the reputation of the person who suffers the offense (SOUZA, 2017).
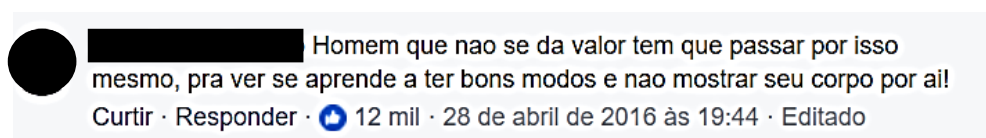
Figure 5: Comment 4[84]

According to the reader's comment, from the establishment of the dialogical relation to patriarchal and sexist utterances (BARRETO, 2004; SOUSA, 2017), it is the
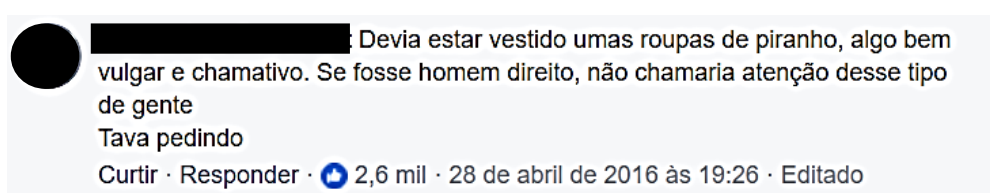
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[82] Our translation into English: "Are you sure he looked? Maybe you imagined all this. Making such a scene over something so little as this…no, no, no…have you had a chance to stop and think that this guy YOU CLAIM TO HAVE LOOKED at your cock could have a family, a job? Do you really want to do this to him??? Think about the guy's chicks...you are going to destroy his reputation, just like that??? You're obviously clueless - taking your cock out in a public bathroom alone. Why do you have to pee????"

[83] For reference, see footnote 39.

[84] Our translation into English: "A man who doesn't have self-respect has to go through this to see if he learns some manners and not expose his body around!"

"victim's" fault he was "harassed," because, according to reader 4, he did not have any self-respect. Because of that, he needed to go through that to learn how to behave. This appropriation of sexist discourses and those related to rape culture highlight the appropriation of the discourse of the other (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929])[85] in a position of tension (BAKHTIN, 1981 [1934-35])[86] and eventually establishing irony as a strategy of resistance (BARRETO, 2004; SOUSA, 2017).

Finally, reader 5, in her comment, reflects and refracts the sexist discourse that women who are victims of rape were probably wearing some eye-catching clothes.

Devia estar vestido umas roupas de piranho, algo bem vulgar e chamativo. Se fosse homem direito, não chamaria atenção desse tipo de gente
Tava pedindo
Curtir · Responder · 2,6 mil · 28 de abril de 2016 às 19:26 · Editado

Figure 6: Comment 5[87]

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[85] For reference, see footnote 3.

[86] For reference, see footnote 30.

[87] Our translation into English: "[He] was probably wearing some slutty clothes, something really vulgar and flashy. If he was an upright man, he wouldn't call the attention of these kind of people. He was asking for it."

In the comment of reader 5, the zone of tension between social voices is apparent; it consequently establishes the resistance-irony by mocking the discourse of the other through the discursive strategy. This confers Volochinov's (1983c [1930]) premise that the "word becomes an arena of class conflict [or distinct social groups], the arena of dissident opinions and classes interests oriented in different ways."[88]

As we can see, in these discourses, irony is used as a discursive strategy of resistance used by women against rape culture and the myths related to it. This way, by appropriating sexist discourses, women establish a zone of tension in their utterances, which aims to contest other utterances. Therefore, regarding the use of irony, more than using an aesthetical principle, women end up using a discursive strategy of resistance against dominant discourses (BRAIT, 2008).

Final Considerations

The objective of this paper was to analyze if, and how, irony serves as a zone of dialogue and tension between different voices/voicings, showing evidence of it as a strategy of feminist resistance. To this end, we relied on the concept of social language, reinforced by Vološinov (1973 [1929]),[89] in which different voices coexist in a dialogic and tense relationship (BAKHTIN, 1981 [1934-35]);[90] we also counted on discussions on irony as a discursive phenomenon that, through the appropriation of the discourse of Others, places of confrontation are created among utterances (BOOTH, 1983; HUTCHEON, 1994;[91] BRAIT, 2008, among others), and on considerations about sexist culture, its perpetuation and rape culture (BARRETO, 2004; NASCIMENTO, 2014; SOUSA, 2017). Thus, we examined the discursive phenomenon in a virtual space, through the comments of women on the social network *Facebook*.

From this analysis, it was possible to perceive that readers, by appropriating the discourse of the Other (sexist discourse) (VOLOŠINOV, 1973 [1929])[92] transform the

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[88] In Portuguese: "a palavra torna-se arena da luta de classes [ou de grupos sociais distintos], a arena da dissidência de opiniões e de interesses de classes orientados de modos distintos." See footnote 22.
[89] For reference, see footnote 3.
[90] For reference, see footnote 30.
[91] For reference, see footnote 39.
[92] For reference, see footnote 5.

word (and the utterance) into an "[…] arena of class struggle [or distinct social groups], the arena of dispute for differently directed class viewpoints and class interests" (VOLOCHINOV, (1983b [1930], p.145)).[93] Furthermore, it was possible to reaffirm, as Bakhtin (1981 [1934-35])[94] did, the nature of the coexistence of different voices in a single utterance, establishing relationships of dialogue or tension between them.

Thus, with regard to the phenomenon of irony, we perceive that, as Booth (1983), Hutcheon (1994)[95] and Brait (2008) highlight, this discursive strategy serves to contest, confront or mock the utterances of Others, through a strategy of "play between what the utterance says and what it implies, aiming to unmask or subvert values" (BRAIT, 2008, p.140).[96] In this way, women readers of the post, through the appropriation of sexist discursive-myths identified by Sousa (2017), end up, in the interaction between what utterances say and imply, subverting sexist culture and, consequently, rape culture, showing its inconsistencies. This process highlights irony as a strategy of resistance by women.

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[93] For reference, see footnote 7.
[94] For reference, see footnote 30.
[95] For reference, see footnote 39.
[96] In the original: "jogo entre o que o enunciado diz e a enunciação faz dizer, com objetivos de desmascarar ou subverter valores."

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