

Queer Representation Incorporated At “Him”, Character Of “The Powerpuff Girls”

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ABSTRACT

In audiovisual's history, minorities as LGBTQ+ people had been excluded or stereotyped; so, this study has as the main question to understand “Him”, character of the cartoon series “The Powerpuff Girls” (1998-2005; produced by Cartoon Network) by the bias of the Queer Theory, which addresses questions about non-heteronormative bodies that belong to marginalized groups whose rights are denied and whose lives are taken. In order to do this, a documentary and exploratory methodology was used, based on different authors researches, such as Guacira Louro, Judith Butler, Edgar Morin. Also, it was conducted the analysis of two episodes: Octil Evil and Bash Birthday. Therefore, the problematizations that are questioned here refer to: a) How the Queer is related to Him and its possible problems and b) The dialectic between the accepted and excluded bodies discourses from the heteronormative society. The argumentation of this research is sustained by the Brazil's data of homophobia and transphobia, which reveals an urge to approach matters about gender and sexuality representations.

KEYWORDS

Body; Queer Theory; Him; The Powerpuff Girls.

1 | INTRODUCTION

According to Louro (2017, p.02), Queer means all body considered awkward, exotic, and which escapes the established norms of a society/culture. Studies about the Queer theme are mostly associated with feminism and gender subjects, in which the majority is about homosexuals, drag queens and transsexuals.

This present research aims to understand the Queer from Him's perspective, a character of Cartoon Network's TV show: The PowerPuff Girls. First, it is important to note that even though The PowerPuff Girls is an American TV show, it had a large repercussion and audience in Brazil; in which had been shown in free-to-air TV channel SBT from 1998 to 2005, and in the pay TV channel Cartoon Network until 2016. To exemplify how Queer and LGBTQ+ themes are relevant in the Brazil's context, it is essential to mention two Brazilian cartoon productions that more expressively address sexuality and Queer: *Girls in the House* (produced since 2014, broadcast on RAOTV's Youtube channel), and *Super Drags* (produced by Netflix and available since 2018). *Girls in the House* mixes the USA and Brazil's pop culture in order to subjectively show gender and sexuality issues in their humorous narrative. *Super Drags*, also through humour, is directly related to the socio-political reality of Brazil's gender and sexuality issues, addressing, for example, the “gay cure” discussion and the conservatism of political figures in their narrative. In addition, these two shows bring features of the Queer, in order to re-signify them, leading to an empowerment of the characters. Thus, it is necessary to justify the decision to analyse Him,

from The PowerPuff Girls, because of the negative representation of how the character may be associated with Queer and how it may have a potential influence in its audience.

The guiding question of this study is to understand if Him could be characterized in Queer's elements and if it could, inquire about his projection above the TV show's audience. In other words, could this characterization contribute to naturalize prejudices or exclusion of groups that identifies as Queers? Could The PowerPuff Girls naturalize LGBTQ-phobia behaviors that must be problematized? Is there something positive in the character Him?

The methodology of this study is an exploratory and documentary discussion, sustained by Queer Theory authors' researches, and records about Queer in Brazilian cinematography productions along with their audience perceptions.

In order to obtain a better character's comprehension, this research analyzed the episodes "Octi Evil" and "Bash Birthday", which gathered his characteristics in two categories: a) elements of mise-en-scène (indumentary, voice, gesticulation, scenography and photography); b) elements of the narrative (Him's behavior and his interaction with the other characters).

The argumentation of this research is sustained by Brazil's data of homophobia and transphobia, which reveals an urge to approach matters about gender and sexuality representations, not only academically but also in every public space.

For example, a report from the Gay Group of Bahia shows that, in 2017, one LGBTQ+ had been killed or committed suicide for homophobic reasons at every 19 hours. As for transphobia cases, 387 murders and 58 suicides had been registered, revealing a 30% increase in relation to 2016 data. Homophobia has been raising in Brazil, taking into consideration that in 2000 occurred 130 murderers motivated by it. In addition, the same report shows that Brazil have the world's highest LGBTQ+ murder rate.

Apart from the physical violence, another example that shows the Brazil's conservatism is the symbolic violence strongly suffered by LGBTQ+ people. Artists as Linn da Quebrada, the drag queens Lia Clark and Pablllo Vittar, the transgender Laerte Coutinho, and funk musician Mc Queer are constantly attacked and offended in many ways due to their political and

identity ideology. Teenagers and children are also a target of this prejudice, which constantly lead them to dropping out school.

It is a fact that Brazil have advertising and entertainment shows with LGBTQ+ content. However, it is necessary to consider if those have been transmitted in a properly and not defamatory way. That must be said because since Brazil is the most LGBTQ+phobic country in world, in which conservatism is rising in policy, social media and private life, it is an urge to have great responsibility in LGBTQ+ representation. This responsibility is also important in kids' media because it is the stage of life where learning is being developed.

Audiovisual productions can not only reinforce stereotypes, as evidenced in Stuart Hall's (1997) reception studies, but also register naturalization processes of social construction, underestimating ethnic-racial, gender, and sexuality social issues.

Lane (1985, p.11) argues that the formulation of these stereotypes hinders a more critical apprehension of social reality, especially when this process begins to occur in childhood. In this stage, words begin to make sense and to transmit socially elaborated meanings, which lead children to relate elements that reinforce a given interpretation of a fact/situation without questioning.

In short, it is possible to realize that an animation is not exempt of influence, because the images may transmit cultural, socio-political and economic values. Thus, when people receive the images, they can assign meanings to them, based on their prior knowledge and learning (ALMONT 1993; JOLY, 1996; KOSSOY, 1999).

Considering the above, this study infers the following question: could Him serve as an ideological reinforcement to spectators/readers whose beliefs and cultures deride and violate the non-heteronormative people?

2 | THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The Queer Theory in the present study is based on Guacira Louro (2017) and Judith Butler's (2003) research, which understand the body as a political institution, and therefore, it emerges from a relation of power. In other words, bodies identified as Queer are awkward bodies that flee from the heterosexual matrix standard. In their studies, the authors address

the questions about these bodies that belong to marginalized groups whose rights are denied, and their lives are taken. Queer, as taught by Louro (2017, p. 03), is the body manifested by resistance, evidencing the values and prejudices that are fundamental to understand and analyze the present study relevance in the Brazil's context – a country that sustains many conservative and prejudiced discourses. Such discourses are rooted in the society, leading to an existence and resistance of Queer people in a culture that excludes and humiliates them.

In this regard, the present study used Margarete Nepomuceno's researches about Cinema New Queer, and character construction subject included in Doc Comparato's book – in which the last was essential to define the observed characteristics at Him analyses.

In addition, another study used to reflect about Queer was Edgar Morin's Theory of Complexity, showed in Anuschka Lemos's (2017) studies, which is essential to understand the dialectic between deviant and perfect bodies.

3 | THE "QUEER" IN AUDIOVISUAL NARRATIVES AND THE AUDIENCE RECEPTION IN BRAZILIAN'S CONTEXT

In audiovisual's history, minorities as LGBTQ+ people had been excluded or stereotyped. In 1960, due to this bad representation, Cinema Queer had emerged to fight against the heteronormative standards. Researches about this cinematographic genre, such as Bessa's study (2014), approaches that this type of narrative has a pretension to question perfection and originality standards, which are presumed at heteronormative way of thinking.

In 1990, the Queer had won other perspectives and had been retitled with a new movement named Cinema New Queer. This movement emerged in opposition of the attacks on the LGBTQ+ community, when a moral perspective was surrounding these group because of AIDS spread. In view of this, Cinema New Queer had approached affirmative narratives about deviant genders and sexualities.

These audiovisual productions, as written by Schoonover and Galt (2015), are radically different in form and style from Hollywood's conventional/traditional narratives since they act in the public space policy and in the cinema aesthetic

potential to make and intervention. Thus, in the audiovisual, Queer appears as a provocation; which appears as minor movements such in the distinguished character construction as well as in the script construction. This leads to question gender and sexuality themes in their dialogues and dramatic sequences.

In Brazil, *Madame Satã*, a 2002 film directed by Karim Aïnouz, had presented a part of the biography of João Francisco dos Santos, which was a black, poor, marginalized, gay, and drag queen – titled as Madame Satã, and played by Lázaro Ramos. Despite his deviant sexuality and his drag, Janot (2018) asserts that are not these characteristics that makes João "abnormal", but his behavior resulted from his social condition. The marginalized João Francisco, therefore, deconstructs the stereotype of the effeminate and fragile gay, reaffirming the character complexity when, in a crash scene, he shouts: "being gay does not make me less man" (AGÊNCIA ESTADO, 2002).

In 2014, *Praia do Futuro*, also directed by Karim Aïnouz, had debuted in Brazilian cinemas. Wagner Moura played the lifeguard Donato, who had felt in love with Konrad, played by Clemens Schick. The narrative, described by Emilio Faustino (2014), included questions beyond the characters sexual orientation, and homosexuality was not the main conflict of the plot. *Praia do Futuro*, perhaps, had revealed, from the Brazilian conservative audience, an aversion of a non-normative behavior. The scene sequences of Donato and Konrad's relationship caused the abandonment of the cinema's audience in the cities of Niterói and São Luís.

As a consequence of this, Cinépolis (a cinema network), in order to avoid the public adversity, had incorporated a previous warning about the content of the narrative. If consented, the viewer received a stamp with the writing "WARNED" at the entrance, which marked his decision to watch *Praia do Futuro* (GUERRA, 2014).

The movies *Madame Satã* and *Praia do Futuro* illustrate the New Cinema Queer motivations of transmitting narratives with characters on the margins of normative sexuality. However, their narrative conflicts surpass the sexual orientation question. Nevertheless, the presence of Queers in the cinema, although distanced from the stereotype in the social imaginary, is able to provide negative reactions to

conservative audiences, as demonstrated in *Praia do Futuro*.

Also, it should be pointed that Queer is not only intrinsic to cinema, but also in soap operas, TV shows and animations. The increase in the Queer theme expression is mainly due to the struggles of the feminist and the LGBTQ+ movements, and also the gender and sexuality studies.

Based on the above, the present study proposes to analyze the Queer in *The PowerPuff Girls*, aiming to understand the representation of its speeches and manifestations in the narrative.

4 | METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this research is an exploratory and documentary discussion based on Queer Theory, which substantiated the initial analysis of Queer aesthetics signs that compose the character Him.

In Him analysis, his appearances in classical animation has been quantified. Thus, of the 78 episodes distributed in 6 seasons, Him is inserted in 17 of them. Two episodes in which the character stands out in the plot were selected for the analysis.

From these two episodes, the construction of Him was analyzed based on two categories: a) elements of the *mise-en-scène*: voice, gesture, scenographic space and photography; and b) elements of the narrative: character actions and his interaction with other characters. Table 1 details each item by category, explaining how the analysis was done.

These elements/categories were chosen to be analyzed because they the aspects of Him’s identity and his experience throughout the animation. After this, the analyzed elements were related to speeches and manifestations that are understandable as Queer.

5 | THE CREATION OF A CHARACTER

When a person reflects about a narrative, whether written, visual or audiovisual, it is important to think about the elements that involve the fictional plot (genre, plot, scene, unit, dramatic time, production, script, creation of characters, and so on).

Among these elements, the focus in this study is the construction of the characters because during this construction it is possible to involve the most diverse

public in their plots, as well as induce a personal identification and feed social stereotypes.

In the shared author's book *Doc Comparato*: from creation to the screenplay (1998), the importance of complexity in character creation is addressed. Therefore, in the creation is necessary that character characteristics – even his gesticulation and the manner of speech, dress, among other elements – are aligned with his attitudes throughout the plot.

The humanization of the character is also important, which could be linked to its childhood, suffered pain and drama. This could lead the character to cause identification with their possible audiences.

Mise-en-Scène Elements	
Indumentary	Clothing and accessories that compose character visual look
Voice	Voice analysis, both in the original and in the Brazilian version
Gesticulation	How character moves and behaves on the scene
Scenography	Places where character is inserted in the narrative
Frame/Photography	Frames/planes in which the analyzed character are shown
Narrative Elements	
Actions	Understand the character's attitudes and reflect if they would be accepted according to Occidental society social norms
Interaction	Interaction with other characters: the way it behaves in front of other narrative characters and how it is received by them

Table 1 | Specification by analyzed category

In the case of villains/antagonists, this is very common because it demonstrates why the character has made arbitrary decisions. In the case of protagonists – usually the “good guys” – although they may show personality flaws over a period (usually throughout an episode), they usually decide for the correct decision. Thus, protagonists are showed with ethic values accepted in a society; which are also expected of them.

Considering children narratives, the transmission of a positive message is essential because at this stage they are in a critical formation. Thus, cartoon series or TV shows for children audience are always searching to teach lessons by the narrative.

6 | THE POWERPUFF GIRLS

The Powerpuff Girls (PPG) is a cartoon series created by Craig McCracken and produced by Cartoon Network, which tells the story of three girls: Bubbles, Buttercup and Blossom (Figure 1).



Figure 1 | The Powerpuff Girls. Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

This animation, broadcast in Brazil by SBT between 1998 to 2005 and by Cartoon Network until 2016, counts 78 episodes distributed over six seasons.

The girls had born by an error in the Professor Utonium's chemical experiment, who is girls' figure of father and guardian. His experiment intended to create the perfect girls, but the accidental X-Element interference succeeded in the creation of these three girls with superpowers.

Bubbles is blond, gentle, and covers her strength through her innocence. Buttercup has black hair, is aggressive and has the ability to freeze the target through exhalation. Blossom, with his red hair, leads the trio. The over-human strength and flying ability of the three girls make them indispensable in the defense of Townsville (POTTS, 2001).

Throughout the narrative, it is common that the Mayor of Townsville, mostly represented by the Secretary Miss Bellum, calls for help to the PowerPuff Girls through their direct-line phone. Thus, the girls help him in situations of different proportions, such as opening a jar of pickles or facing a villain that is destroying the town (POTTS, 2001).

There are also regular villains in the animation, which eventually are highlighted throughout the episodes, such as: The Amoeba Boys, The Ganggreen Gang, Mojo Jojo, Princess Morbucks, Fuzzy Lumpkins, and Him.

7 | HIM ANALYSIS AT POWERPUFF GIRLS TV SHOW

7.1 | ANALYZED EPISODES SCRIPT

The episodes Octil Evil and Bash Birthday had been chosen because the highlighted appearance of Him.

Specifically, Octil Evil – inserted in the first season – was chosen for being the first time that Him appears in the cartoon series, so it is possible to observe the reception that other characters have about the villain.

Bash Birthday – inserted in the second season – was chosen because it brings other villains in the narrative, so it is possible to observe how Him behaves as much as his relationship with the inhabitants of Townsville.

Based on that, the present study shows a brief summary of the episodes that were analyzed to deepen the following elements observed during the two episodes: a) clothing; b) voice; c) gesticulation; d) mise-en-scène; e) reception; and f) attitudes/actions.

It was chosen to describe the characteristics observed in a single text since most of the identified characteristics were inserted in both episodes. In addition, it should be noted that some of the features were explored deeper than others because of their complexity.

7.2 | OCTIL EVIL

The episode begins with an argument between Buttercup and Blossom. The villain Him – who had never appeared in the plot – is presented by the narrator as "a creature so sinister, so despicable that even to pronounce his name causes fear in the heart of the person." Him, while watching the girls' argument, realizes that promoting discord among sisters can create chaos in the city.

Thus, the villain uses Bubble's octopus teddy bear to talk with her and manipulate her to create fights between her sisters. In this way, Bubbles suggests to Buttercup that she should be the leader of the team and that they should not follow Blossom's orders.

The fight for power between the sisters becomes serious and put at risk the lives of Townsville's residents. After the disagreements become unsustainable, Bubble looks for support in her confidant: the octopus teddy bear – which in this moment reveals his true identity.

From this moment, Him tells Bubbles that she was the one who promoted discord among her sisters, and then he becomes a monstrous creature that promises to destroy the city. Bubble's life is put at danger while Him is delighted to see his plans in action.

The city is finally saved – as usual in the plot – when the sisters unite to save Bubbles from Him's hands, who even after being defeated does not express guilt in his actions.

7.3 | BASH BIRTHDAY

This episode begins with a surprise birthday party for the PowerPuff Girls promoted by Townsville citizens. In this party, all the characters, including the villains, had given gifts to the girls.

The episode shows the evilness of each villain, through their gifts that have the purpose to destroy the city. Each gift becomes a new challenge for the girls, while the villains watch the party on prison. Meanwhile, Him stands out for being the only one that is not in jail. Then, at a certain time in the birthday party, Him appears and persuades the girls to open his gift.

The girls are glad to receive from Him a small red bull very similar to his appearance. However, the moment of happiness is short because the animal becomes a monster that puts in danger everyone's life.

After the destruction of the monster, it turns into candy – referencing a *piñata*. Following the Him's failure, the villain is criticized by other villains. However, Him does not assume the position of a loser and goes away in a position of superiority.

7.4 | HIM CONSTRUCTION AND CHARACTERIZATION

Him is a character with red skin, claws instead of hands and has his figure related to the Devil. Him is here understood as a crossdresser, which Barbosa (2014, p.18) explains as a person who are characterized by garment from the opposite biological sex (Figure 2).



Figure 2 | Him. Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

The consideration is made especially because of Him's clothes, composed by lipstick, pointed eyelashes, black high-heeled boots, red pom-pom

skirt and top, which are all outstanding elements usually attributed to the female gender.

Him has an androgynous voice – in both original and Brazilian version. It is soft when the character is calm, but when his true intentions are revealed his voice becomes serious, demonstrating his anger. His body language is bouncy and extravagant; when the character is excited, he screams and laughs intensely.

For example, in Octil Evil, the villain rolls and throws himself into a sofa while watching the chaos that he provoked in Townsville. In another situation of the same episode, the villain walks smiling through his house in high heels while is pretending to be Bubble's octopus teddy bear (the referenced sequences are shown in Figure 3).



Figure 3 | Him Episode: Octil Evil. Frames: 01min 01s and 04min 15s. Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

The impact of this negative representation in PowerPuff Girls' audience (especially at children) is not a cause-and-effect relationship; that is: a child who watches PPG will automatically dislike a different person, who have Queer characteristics in their behavior.

The aversion will be gradually generated from different mediatic approaches, such as another cartoons, TV shows, books, as well as dialogues, jokes, and every day conversations with people who already carry a stigma of Queer. All of the mentioned before contribute to the perception of non-heteronormative people and may generate prejudice.

The aggravating factor is that PPG inserts Queer into the early life of an individual in a negative form. From this, the cartoon does not act as a channel of visibility, but rather as a way to promote stereotypes about the Queer culture and to promote sexism.

Furthermore, it is not only in his garments that Him is negativized. For example, the *mise-en-scène*, in which visual composition Him's elements appears (especially when alone), is characterized by the predominance of reddish shades, which may

contribute to associate him even more to the devil. Especially because hell is in all representations, including religious, defined as red (Figure 4).

Eva Heller (2013) suggests that the use of red may be associated with sin and immorality, depending on the context. This interpretation has a historical basis. For example, in the Middle Ages, redheads were associated with witches. They were punished because witchcraft was – and still is – considered to be impure and contrary to the precepts of traditional religions. "Hell is red, and also 'tiny hells' – where some red lights glow. And a faint red light creates an environment of sin" as said by Heller.



Figure 4 | Him. Episodes: Octil Evil and Bash Birthday. Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

7.5 | CHARACTERS RELATIONSHIP

Regarding Him's relationship with the other characters in the narrative, it was noted that the villain is never welcomed by the other villains or the citizens. The reason is that they fear or scorn him. For example, in *Octil Evil*, the first time his name is referenced in the cartoon, the ambient sound was inserted after his name pronunciation to dramatize the sequence.

One of the catchphrases used in the series to refer to the Him is: "that one who cannot be mentioned", a fact that can refer to the figure of a devil. Thus, there is a concealment of the other characters against the villain, who avoid even to pronounce his name.

His attitudes/actions throughout the analyzed episodes are negative, even though some may seem initially good, they aim to promote discord in Townsville. He seems to see everything happening in Townsville without leaving his home, even the PPG intimate moments at their house, through a small television.

The character chuckles alone when chaos is set in the city and shows no regrets about his actions – even when he is discovered or when his evilness is

stopped by the PGG. Also, he has no compassion for the Townsville citizens.

Another action that should be mentioned is his ease in manipulating other characters. This characteristic was observed in both episodes: *Octil Evil* and *Birthday Bash*. In the first episode, the character had convinced Bubble to argue with her sisters; and in the second, Him convinced the Professor and the PPG to accept his birthday gift.

It is also noteworthy to observe the frameworks through a *mise-en-scène* perspective, which is not only for an aesthetic reason but also a symbolic issue that defines what is and what is not on the focus of the narrative. When the character changes his tone to speak something evil, the focus is on his face to emphasize his villainous character. The plan is closed at this point and when Him is disguised – that is, pretends to have some positive attitude – the plan is usually open to show the reaction of the other characters.

Him characterization contributes to the constantly character marginalization in the narrative, understand here as Queer. Therefore, it is necessary to think that cartoons, TV shows, and books are actually creating stereotypes for non-privileged people, as Queer identities.

The biggest issue pointed here is the use of these contents (especially in childhood, which is the stage where children are learning norms and social rules) may contribute to a negative reception about Queer, especially in Brazil.

Queer, as elucidated by Louro (2017), stands against heteronormative logic, which establishes "the maintenance of continuity and coherence between sex, gender and sexuality", and beyond this logic "lies the unthinkable, the intelligible". Him, therefore, presents himself as Queer by denaturalizing the binary order culturally assented as "normal" between sex (male/female) and gender (masculine/feminine).

The character presents a discrepancy between his name and appearance. In the Portuguese language, as in the original version, his name "Ele/Him" refers to a male personal pronoun. On the other hand, his appearance does not correspond to this gender. His clothing, long eyelashes, makeup, and goatee coexist with culturally constructed masculine and feminine elements, attributing to Him a body of hybrid

appearance – that is, a body unthinkable under a heteronormative logic.

The sharp-pitched oscillation in his voice denotes androgyny, the non-identification of gender. The transience of his voice, therefore, admits the ambiguity, the "being-among" of the Queer bodies.

The place where Him lives is also not identifiable. For example, Mojo Jojo has his place positioned in Townsville. Fuzzy Lumpkins, although living in the forestal part of the city, has his location presented. Him, however, lives in a room situated in an unknown place. Based on this and considering his likeness to the devil, it may be assumed that Him lives in hell – that is, in the margins of the spaces occupied by the other villains in the cartoon.

His relationship with other characters from the narrative is characterized by fear or laughter. In fact, unlike the other villains in the series, Him has a lonely life.

Lastly, Him is a memorable character. His gesticulation is extravagant; he imposes himself in his own way and he has his own temperament. When he is happy – even if it is for unethical reasons – he lies down and laughs without worrying about what the other characters will think about it. He stands out and he does not camouflage its personality to please anyone in the narrative.

7.6 BODIES' DIALECTIC AT THE POWERPUFF GIRLS

In contrast to Him, there is the figure of Miss Bellum, the assistant/secretary of the city's Mayor. Regarding Miss Bellum description, the girl (Figure 5) has red curly hair. She is tall and has a body considered as standard. Her clothes have a red coloration, which are composed of a skirt, blazer, and high heels – accentuating her curves. In relation to the red coloration, it may in some situations/circumstances symbolize sensuality, desire, and lust (HELLER, 2013).



Figure 5 | Miss Bellum. Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

In the cartoon, Miss Bellum manages the city, as the Mayor is unable to fulfill his duties. Thus, she handles a different variety of situations, being admired by Bubble, Buttercup and Blossom.

In analyses about image reception, Anuschka Lemos (2017) argues – referring to Edgar Morin's Theory of Complexity – that complexity is inserted in its opposites. In other words, something exists only in relation to completeness from elsewhere.

According to Butler (2003), all bodies are a discourse. Thus, Miss Bellum and Him carry dichotomies in their constructions. That is, they do not complement each other, but they are coexisting bodies in the same space. One is admired in the narrative because of her actions/attitudes, beauty, conveying safety and arousing admiration among the Townsville residents. The other one is associated to the exotic, the ugly, the weird, and his attitudes provokes fear and laughter in other characters. Table 2 illustrates the differences explored here in a brief way.

Differences between Him and Miss Bellum		
Differences	Him	Miss Bellum
Reception	Negative/ Invisibility	Positive/ Admiration
Appearance	Ugly/Marginal/ Awkward	Beauty/Standard/ Desire
Behavior	Evil/ Individualist	Goodness/ Abnegation
Feelings	Fear and Laughter	Security and Admiration

Table 2 | Differences between Him and Miss Bellum

Specifically about Miss Bellum, it has been observed from the analyzed episodes and her actions, that she has a harmonic relationship with other Townsville inhabitants. Therefore, she does not have conflicts with any of the residents.

Miss Bellum has emotional intelligence in risk situations, demonstrating calm when the city is put in danger. Her ability to articulate and manage are key pieces to making decision process that involves city governance (a task that should be performed by the Mayor).

Her attitudes are always for the common good; there is no behavior that is directed to herself. She is dedicated to public life, even though for most Townsville residents she stands out only for its physical beauty. Her figure represents sensuality and desire, because it represents what is wanted within a heteronormative society. For example, big breasts,

thin waist and broad hips – a worshiped body similar to actresses, such as Marilyn Monroe.

The spaces where the character is inserted prove that she is accepted. However, she is rarely represented as a protagonist since she is restricted to the role of her beautiful body admiration and not for her interpersonal characteristics, which reinforce sexism discourses.

Regarding her intrapersonal characteristics, she is sensitive, gentle and never complains about her duties, even when she is forced to perform activities that do not correspond to her professional attributions (such as opening a pickle jar). The sequences in which she participates are, in most cases, with the Mayor. In the cartoon, she ends up assuming his tasks, but never receives the credit for them. Thereby, this fact that may contribute to the discourse that behind every man there is a woman.

Despite Him and Miss Bellum suffer from sexism, she does not problematize her position. She usually remains in silence, as if some say that she will be accepted as long as she stays quiet in her place.

She is a docile body, which according to Foucault (2002) is the body which corresponds to what is requested, endowed with discipline. In the author's words:

The discipline thus manufactures submissive and exercised bodies, 'docile' bodies. Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience) [...] disciplinary coercion establishes in the body the coercive link between increased aptitude and marked domination" Foucault (2002) published in *Vigiar e Punir*, 26 ed.



Figure 6 | Miss Bellum. Episode: Octil Evil. Frame: 01min 47s
Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

Specifically, on Miss Bellum's gestures, it can be observed that Miss Bellum, in both analyzed episodes, is positioned behind the Mayor (Figure 6),

which demonstrates the hierarchy between them. This is evident in the Octil Evil episode when Mayor authoritatively says with his finger raised: "Oh, Miss Bellum, now you can return to your work."

The scenes' frame of the narrative in which Miss Bellum appears are mixed by opened planes (scenes in which the character contrasts with other inhabitants) and medium planes that focus on her body (breasts, waist, and hip). Thus, the scene frame in Figure 7 does not show Miss Bellum head but reveals parts of her body – even when she is speaking – while the Mayor figure is represented from the neck to head. This frame can be read as a metaphor for sexism because the man is associated with intelligence (which is demonstrated by his posture and his head), while the woman is associated with beauty and the physical body.



Figure 7 | Miss Bellum. Episode: Octil Evil. Frame: 01min 41s.
Credit: The Cartoon Network Inc.

Even if Miss Bellum is presented in many of the sequences of the analyzed episodes (especially in Birthday Nash), she seems to be non-important in the scene. This is due mainly by the absence of her speeches and being positioned behind other characters or objects.

Since Queer is a movement that questions the heteronormative logic current terms, it is assumed that for the movement to exist, the passivity and acceptance of this society must also be present. If everyone behaved without rules, the Queer movement itself would be pointless. In other words, for confrontation/resistance exist, obedience has to be standardized and systematic.

Him imposes himself on the established rules of the heteronormative society and, therefore, is demonize. Miss Bellum accepts what is imposed to her without questions. There is a dialectic between these bodies/speeches, while Him's body is an awkward body, Miss. Bellum has a docile body. Both

discourses demonstrated here by these characters are actually created by a hegemonic media and the current culture of each society. Queer bodies are excluded, have their basic rights denied, are killed or represented – when it happened – In a comical way, mostly to arouse laugh or fear. On the other hand, docile bodies accept what is attributed to them – even injustices – without questions.

8 | CONCLUSION

A problematization has to be made about Him character representation. Based on the analysis, the character is considered Queer. However, it is necessary to evidencing that his negative aspects may influence children that Queer is something to be feared or confront.

In addition, considering the aversion of the Brazilian audience to the Queer narratives and the increasing violence against the LGBTQ+ community in Brazil, it is inferred as negative the incorporation of a Queer identity into the figure of a villain with a devil body.

The evil representation of Queer in audiovisual productions can contribute to the formation of a prejudice. It is not stated here, nor is there any purpose to deal with such a serious subject as a cause and effect relationship. However, the LGBTQ-phobia data in Brazil warn the need for empowerment of these bodies, not only in the audiovisual, but in all public space.

The conclusion based on the character is that – even though its existence is of extreme relevance to present the Queer, which is almost never represented in children's narratives – it is necessary to rethink the construction of these representations, in order to positivize them.

Him, in the way it is presented, associates wickedness, selfishness, lack of ethics, and other negative features to the Queer. His lack of humanity and association with the devil makes him to be feared or ridiculed in the narrative. In addition, the character presents lack of complexity in his creation since it does not present characteristics such as: discernment about what is right or wrong, affection/anguish, flashbacks, which limits the considerations and the analyzes about Him, and as consequence, about Queer.

Finally, this study – although embryonic – reflects a necessity to research similar themes in order to

problematize, highlight and examine behaviors pre-established by the society. It is suggested for further studies, the reflection and speeches analysis of the new cartoon series: PowerPuff Girls released in 2016 and also produced by Cartoon Network.

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