





## CARTOONS OF THE NURSE IMAGE IN THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS FROM 1920 TO 1931

### CHARGES DA IMAGEM DA ENFERMEIRA NA IMPRENSA ILUSTRADA ENTRE 1920 A 1931

### CARICATURAS DE LA IMAGEN DE LAS ENFERMERAS EN LA PRENSA ILUSTRADA ENTRE 1920 Y 1931

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## ABSTRACT

The study has as its object the representation of the nurse's image with its attributes through cartoons in scenes of care published in the Revista Fon-Fon (1920-1931). **Objective:** to identify cartoons by the content of representations of nurses in the illustrated press; to analyze the circumstances of its broadcasting about the nurses in the cartoons; and to comment on the representations as symbolic elements for the construction of the public image of the nurse. **Method:** mastery of the history of visual culture through the search for nurse cartoons in the Revista Fon-Fon. These cartoons were analyzed by analysis matrix. **Result:** the search resulted in three images dated 1921, 1929 and 1931 which, after analysis, allowed identifying the circumscription of the context of the Sanitary Reform led by Carlos Chagas. **Conclusion:** the nurses' representations in the cartoons were the main elements for the socio-political and sanitary aspects.

**Keywords:** Nursing; History of Nursing; Symbolism; Scientific Communication and Diffusion; Schools, Nursing; Nurse's Role.

## RESUMO

O estudo tem como objeto a representação da imagem da enfermeira com seus atributos, por meio de charges em cenas do cuidado veiculadas na Revista Fon-Fon (1920-1931). **Objetivo:** identificar as charges pelo conteúdo de representações de enfermeiras veiculadas na imprensa ilustrada; analisar as circunstâncias de sua veiculação sobre as enfermeiras nas charges; comentar as representações como elementos simbólicos para a construção da imagem pública da enfermeira. **Método:** domínio da história da cultura visual a partir da busca de charges de enfermeira na revista Fon-Fon. Essas charges foram analisadas mediante matriz de análise. **Resultado:** a busca resultou em três imagens datadas de 1921, 1929 e 1931, que após análise se identificou a circunscrição do contexto da Reforma Sanitária liderada por Carlos Chagas. **Conclusão:** as representações das enfermeiras nas charges foram elementos protagonistas para os aspectos ocorridos no âmbito sociopolítico e sanitário.

**Palavras-chave:** Enfermagem; História da Enfermagem; Simbolismo; Comunicação e Divulgação Científica; Escolas de Enfermagem; Papel do Profissional de Enfermagem.

## RESUMEN

El estudio tiene como objeto la representación de la imagen de las enfermeras con sus atributos por medio de caricaturas en escenas de cuidado publicadas en la revista Fon-Fon (1920-1931). **Objetivo:** identificar las caricaturas por el contenido de las representaciones de enfermeras publicadas en la prensa ilustrada; analizar las circunstancias de su divulgación en las ilustraciones; comentar las representaciones como elementos simbólicos para la construcción de la imagen pública de la enfermera. **Método:** dominio de la historia de la cultura visual a partir de la búsqueda de caricaturas de las enfermeras en la revista Fon-Fon. Estas caricaturas fueron analizadas por la matriz de análisis. **Resultado:** la búsqueda resultó en tres imágenes de 1921, 1929 y 1931 donde, después de analizarse, se identificaron la circunscripción del contexto de la Reforma Sanitaria dirigida por Carlos Chagas. **Conclusión:** las representaciones de las enfermeras en las caricaturas fueron los elementos principales para los eventos ocurridos en el ambiente sociopolítico y sanitario.

**Palabras clave:** Enfermería; Historia de la Enfermería; Simbolismo; Comunicación y Divulgación Científica; Facultades de Enfermería; Rol de la Enfermera.

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## INTRODUCTION

The research has as object of study the image representation of the nurse's image with its attributes, through cartoons in scenes of care, published in the *Revista Fon-Fon*. Its temporal delimitation is the period from 1920 to 1931. This study is justified by Decree N° 3,987 of January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1920, which established the National Department of Public Health/ *Departamento Nacional de Saúde Pública* (DNSP), having as its final landmark Decree N° 20,109, of June 15<sup>th</sup>, 1931, which regulated the practice of Nursing in Brazil and set the conditions for the equalization of the Nursing schools, making the Donna Ana Nery Nursing School/ *Ana Nery Escola de Enfermagem* a standard.

In this context, *Rio de Janeiro*, the capital of Brazil in the 1920s, was the largest city in the country at the time of the *Belle Époque* period in the history of the Brazilian capital that began in the late nineteenth century and was characterized by modernization from Europeanization, more specifically following the model of the city of Paris.

For this reason, the culture and urbanization of the city of *Rio de Janeiro* were strongly influenced by the French during this period. In the capital, the intellectuals were divided between Catholics, immigrants from the Brazilian Academy of Letters/ *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (ABL) and bohemians: humorists, poets and novelists.<sup>1</sup>

Humor was their language, especially with the multiplication of illustrated magazines. On the other hand, there was some disruption of this unity after World War I, due to other groups considered non-bohemian, Catholic and immigrant from the ABL, who decided to engage in the pursuit of national unity, self-identity and the creation of a Brazilian nation. To do so, they gave up humor on the nationalist scene. Humor came to be seen as something negative, as it brought to light the idea of irresponsibility on the part of the intellectuals.<sup>1</sup>

The intellectual groups shifted their focus, but bohemians like *Raul Pederneiras*, *Kalixto*, *Emílio de Menezes*, and *Bastos Tigre*, among others, remained faithful to the irony in response to the circumstantial pressures.<sup>2</sup>

With the imminence of the Independence Centenary, *Rio de Janeiro*, under the presidency of *Epitácio Pessoa* and having *Carlos Sampaio* as mayor, promoted structural changes, such as: demolition of *Morro do Castelo*; construction of palaces, where they would house representatives of countries; pavement renovations; and changes in general. The idea of the time was that a big party was held for the insertion of the country in the modern world of the great powers.

The magazines of the time believed that, despite Brazil's economic situation being in deficit and government spending on works being excessive, structural changes were necessary due to the importance of the event and the reception of visitors that the city would receive in 1922. The cartoonists, however,

did not agree and, as a result, they criticized the works for the Centenary, like an old man sitting on a turtle trying to get closer to the city, to report that there were delays in the works.<sup>1</sup>

The artists made a toast for the society of the time with a boom of the caricatured and cartooned artistic portrayals of the moment.<sup>1</sup> The comic, an instrument used by them to communicate with the readers of the illustrated magazines, seeks to make the reader happy, in order to remove the suffering from the lived reality.<sup>2</sup> From this assertion, it can be inferred that this implied the understanding that humor is the emergent art of democratic societies and is considered a critical tool for the established powers.<sup>3</sup>

## DEVELOPMENT

Laughter is something strictly characteristic of the human being. Its use is considered an object external to the individual, as it can be understood as the act of laughing at oneself.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the comic word, from its origin in Greece, was to be intended for theater in satirical mode, but over time it came to represent what was intended to make laugh and no longer the scenes presented in theatrical performances.

The term playful comes from the Latin *jocus*, which means fun. In Portuguese it has the meaning of "joke, which is said to amuse, to arouse laughter".<sup>5</sup> The Royal Spanish Academy treats it as gracious, subtle, insightful and encouraging. Examples are comic books (CBs), which feature various strands of image representations, including caricatures, cartoons, humorous drawing, and comic books.<sup>2</sup>

For the cartoon, it is the critical form, in the humorous modality, of fact/event through graphic reproduction conveyed as news known to the public, but in the interpretation of the cartoonist's optics, articulating image and text.<sup>6</sup> Its occurrence operates on the basis of the facts and the prior knowledge of the subject addressed in the charge by the reader. Thus, it is one of the factors to understand it, but it does not necessarily have articulation with the image and the word, as it is a strategy to provoke the antithesis effect, as a focus on the reader's attention.<sup>7</sup>

Accordingly, it has the following objectives: to identify the cartoons, having as content representations of nurses published in the illustrated press; to analyze the circumstances of the cartoons about the nurses; and to discuss the representations as symbolic elements for the construction of the public image of the nurse.

The justification adopted refers to the adherence of the role of drawing professionals in the formation of public opinion and the construction of the public image of the nurse. At this point, one cannot help but mention what happened on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2015 about the case of *Charlie Abdo*, when four cartoonists were murdered by individuals linked to the

Al-Qaeda terrorist network in response to the publication of cartoons in which the prophet Muhammad was portrayed in caricature form by the magazine in Paris, France. This sparked debate about the limit of the visual representation in the world press.

This event in current times is based on the justification and relevance of understanding for reading the professional image specifically of the nurse and the relevance of the rereading that other professionals could make about this professional at the time.

From this, this researcher was led to the matrix research project entitled "The public image of the nurse", which investigates the construction of the public image of the nurse and its mechanisms in the perspective of semiotic history that, over time, in the domains of history. today, it is called the history of visual culture.

## METHODOLOGY

An exploratory research study that has as perspective the history in the field of the visual culture, being chosen the *Revista Fon-Fon* for the search of images in cartoons of nurses.

Semiotic analysis has, as one of its attributions, synonymism with logic. That is, it can be defined as "a formal doctrine of signs, resulting from observation and subsequent generalization by abstraction of the characteristics of this sign". The production of the signification of signs receives the concept of semiosis by Pierce, who treats it as an intertwined process of three subjects: a sign, the object and its interpretant.<sup>8</sup>

The *Revista Fon-Fon* was one of the four most read illustrated magazines at the time and was intended to bring readers publications in the form of news, advertisements, cartoons, besides several subjects.<sup>8</sup>

The search for cartoons occurred on the website of the Digital Library of the National Library, using the term "nurse". 142 occurrences were obtained in the studied period. Most of the findings were from the search term without any image association. The findings of the term, in association with the cartoons of nurses presented in this research, had, by criterion, representations of women bearing personal attributes that referred to the nurse attire, especially: hat, veil, cap and symbol of the cross. After image collection, an analysis matrix was applied for the decoding of the imagery elements, which is composed of four parts: identification data, expression plane data, content plane and complementary data obtained from another image.<sup>9</sup>

The research, for comprehending the period from 1920 to 1931, respected Law number 9,610/1998, which refers to the authorization, updating and consolidation of copyright legislation, as well as other measures.

## RESULT

The search resulted in three images that are identified by the expression facsimile because they were previously printed in the media dating from 1921, 1929 and 1931 on the pages of the *Revista Fon-Fon*.

Prior to the presentation of the facsimiles found in the magazine, it should be noted that the *Revista Fon-Fon* was created in 1907, circulated until 1958 and featured blatant content from the society of the Brazilian capital, with many photographs, illustrations, literature and cartoons policies and criticism. Its content characteristic was comical and critical, besides the spread of advertisements, when it made it a profuse circulation.<sup>8</sup>

The cartoons identified in the *Revista Fon-Fon* correspond to the period of the Sanitary Reform, led by *Carlos Chagas*. They punctually reveal characteristics of three moments of this context, namely: the first was understood as a reaction of the initial process, the second as intermediate and the third as the end of the Reformation period. In short, it is possible to identify truncated or not truncated messages, through the striking personal attributes of each educational institution, the Vocational School of Nurses/*Escola Profissional de Enfermeiras e Enfermeiros*, the Brazilian Red Cross Practice School/*Escola Prática da Cruz Vermelha Brasileira* and the Nursing School/*Escola de Enfermeiras* of the DNSP, in virtue of the sociopolitical scenario in the eyes of those who produced the cartoons.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The first facsimile found was published on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 1921. At that time, Law N° 3,987 of January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1920 was already in force, sanctioned by *Epitácio Pessoa*. This law reorganized the public health services, when the DNSP was created, in which doctor *Carlos Chagas*, as director, promoted changes in the Brazilian health project, remaining until 1926, being replaced by *Clementino Fraga*. *Fraga* stood out in his management of the fight against the yellow fever outbreak in the Brazilian capital, between 1927 and 1928. His departure from the leadership of the DNSP was motivated by the 1930 Revolution, and was replaced by *Belisario Penna*.<sup>10</sup>

Since the creation of this department, the State has brought together issues that were previously dealt with in isolation or as a matter of police forum, since the vision of public assistance was that of maternal, geriatric and psychiatric care, more specifically. directed towards madness, combining public and private institutions, hospices, polyclinics, dispensaries, orphanages, nursing homes and medical posts.<sup>11,12</sup>

Medical-sanitary thinking was the transforming society and politics of the time. He supported the transformations operated by the department, which reorganized the health

services and had as its main factors rural prophylaxis services in the *Distrito Federal*, other states and the territory of *Acre*, surveillance of female and child labor conditions, quality control and the implementation of an agreement with the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>11</sup>

Arthur Bernardes, elected as President of the Republic in 1922, intended the focus for the health services. An example of this was Decree N° 16,300 of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1923, which approved the regulation of the DNSP, treating as one of the activities of the DNSP the aspect of rural sanitation in the *Distrito Federal*, states and the federal territory of *Acre*, as promotion of federal child hygiene and antituberculosis campaigns.<sup>11</sup>

In 1923 the Brazilian Hygiene Society/*Sociedade Brasileira de Higiene* (SBH) was created through the articulation movement of the now defunct Pro-Sanitation League of Brazil. From this milestone began the practice of public health, even in the intellectual field, as in the national congresses of sanitarians. This implied the SBH's break with the nationalist generation of the league.

The state's commitments to the Rockefeller Foundation were challenged by the basic movement. The points questioned were the goal of yellow fever prophylaxis and other diseases in some regions of the Republic.

At the same time, the American nurses, coming from the Brazilian government's agreement with the Rockefeller Foundation, intended to build an image of modern nursing. That said, part of the doctors of the DNSP felt upset, because they wanted to be the agents of solutions to problems of everyday practices.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1 - Cartoon: the nurse and the DNSP (1921).

Facsimile N° 1 refers to the image of a woman in a nurse attire. It is composed of a veil, the symbol of the cross and the initials of the DNSP, which refers to the decoding of the

DNSP. The scene refers to the application of medication to the hypertrophied muscle of a gentleman's arm by means of a full-size syringe with the inscription "emergency". The man who receives the medication has a pair of wings on his head, showing a look of dissatisfaction and/or distrust. The cartoon is accompanied by the following caption: "*Sanitary Ranzinism. Many injections...*"

By articulating the image to the context, some aspects of interest for the construction of the public image of the nurse can be inferred, namely: the woman in the nurse's costume associated with the acronym DNSP led the unsuspecting reader to be the newly created DNSP, by the acronym in uniform. But at the time it can be said to be a misconception, for either the visiting or the nurse, the personal attribute of the veil did not carry any *nexus* with that department.

It should be noted that the hygiene visitors emerged from the Emergency course, through Decree N° 14,354, of September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1920, and that the first professionals from the DNSP School of Nurses/ graduated in 1925.<sup>14</sup>

The symbolic elements – veil and the symbol of the cross – were a relevant attribute of the Brazilian Red Cross/*Cruz Vermelha Brasileira* (CVB). In this sense, the veil refers to the daughters of Mary, the brides, Sisters of Charity, and some religious images. Based on interpretation from the perspective of fashion, this personal attribute leads to the reading of identity concealment and highlights the morality of those who wear it. Associated with the symbol of the cross from the Red Cross, this strengthens, even without the secular institution, the significance of charity and kindness attributed to the nurses trained by that educational institution.<sup>15</sup>

It is noteworthy that the CVB, at the time, had the Nursing Practice School, with the following courses: Volunteer Nurse, Professional Nurse and Visiting Nurses. The first two were coordinated by the doctor *Getúlio dos Santos* and the third was designed and taught by Amaury de Medeiros, who had his course between 1920 and 1922.<sup>16</sup>

As can be identified, the focus was on the Sanitary Reform, led by *Carlos Chagas*, in view of the sanitary conditions of *Rio de Janeiro*. In this sense, the assumption is that the cartoon, without any identified authorship, was intended to the belief established by the Brazilian Red Cross, in its performance, by the symbolic attributes, as criticism to the experienced by the population of *Rio de Janeiro* to the underprivileged – represented by the image of a gentleman with a pair of wings, who is attributed an approximate significance of sclerosis. This implied that he should be treated/cared for, but that public policies aimed at health did not give care.

It follows from the foregoing that, in making the cartoon, the author of the drawing intended to criticize the public policies of the DNSP and associated the attributes of the



Brazilian Red Cross to this end, including reinforcing with the acronym used. But mistakenly in the personal attributes of the nurse's representation or even because he was imbued with the symbolic belief of the CVB, he tried to articulate some symbolic elements, possibly resulting in a truncated message at the time for the reader.



Figure 2 - Cartoon: the nurse and the sick (1929).

Facsimile N° 2 shows a woman in a nurse attire. It is composed of a cap, which by attribute refers to the decoding of the *Alfredo Pinto* Nursing Professional School, an offshoot of the Nursing Professional School. The scene leads to the ambience of a room, showing a gentleman lying with a bandage around his head. He seems to be comfortable, with pillows and his body covered to the neck, in a melancholic state and with bruises on his face, due to dark marks on the nasal and periorbital areas. In the background of the scene, it is possible to identify part of a decorative frame and a vase with flowers. The cartoon is accompanied by the following caption: "The nurse (sad). – And I think the perpetrator should have been at least kind enough to return you your ear!..."

The image evokes the intermediate period of the Health Reform, when nurses from the DNSP were trained and supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>17</sup>

But if one considers the possibility of being DNSP nurses, it is a mistake, which leads to the interpretation of being the *Escola Profissional de Enfermeiras Alfredo Pinto* (EPEAP) or the CVB Nursing Practice School. In this sense, the possibility of having a professional formed by the last educational institution

is discarded, especially because of the absence of the symbol of the cross, which directs the thought to the EPEAP, particularly for the attribute of the cap.

Therefore, the personal attribute of the woman's head associated with the subtitle articulated to the scene, it is inferred that it is a critical message directed to the possible fragility or abandonment of the alienated who roamed the city streets. This inference is possible, since 1929 studies, on the one hand, reveal the need for qualification of nurses and to specialize in caring for the alienated;<sup>18</sup> and, on the other, the possibility of criticism directed to public health, considering that the nurses in this field were leaving this area to be destined for the hospital space.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 3 - Cartoon: the nurse and the doctor (1931).

The third facsimile bears the image of a woman in a nurse attire. She is sideways, dressed with a uniform with cap, which by attribute refers to the decoding of the school of the DNSP, and she has a clipboard in her hand. The scene does not clearly locate the space, whether bedroom, corridor, ward or operating room, because of the stretcher with a person lying down, covered to the neck with a sheet. On the left side of the scene there is a man in a doctor's suit: leg-length and long-sleeved. On a stretcher, a gentleman lying, letting himself appear comfortable with a pillow. The scene of the three described in the imagery text is accompanied by the following caption: "The nurse (sad). – Do you want me to classify this case as appendicitis, doctor?"

The time of cartoon leads to the legal provision, Decree N° 20,109/1931, which regulated the practice of nursing in Brazil, set the conditions for the equalization of the nursing schools and

determined that the *Anna Nery Escola de Enfermagem* become an official standard institution for teaching in Brazilian Nursing.

When articulating image to context, directed to imagery reading, it can be abstracted that the nurse, as an intermediary of the doctor and the sick, would make the record, however, manipulated by the doctor and having as argument the mistake. To think of this possibility, within the scope of the legal provision, was to question the nurses' attitudes towards the credibility imposed by the Decree, in considering that educational institution as standard.<sup>18,19</sup>

In commenting on such cartoons from truncated messages, inferences and questions from the legal system, it is believed that this was the climate of that time, due to social, political and sanitary circumstances. This emphasizes the construction of the public image of nurses who, on the one hand were seen in common sense as angels or similar figures but, on the other hand, the cartoons used them as protagonists of scenes of political and social background care, considering that, for the unsuspecting reader, mental confusion would not be far from occurring on the nurse's image.

Thus, whether on the positive side of the nurse's visibility on the pages of the *Revista Fon-Fon*, or as the protagonist as a messenger of the political, social and health criticism of that panorama, the nurses were figures of representations of interest to the cartoonists, considered by them, possibly, as important professionals in the field of public health.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As can be identified from the analysis of the cartoons, the representations of nurses were protagonists of the social, political and health messages, which does not remove, randomly or not, the symbolic struggle for the enunciation of their image in the public environment. And this leads to the survival of the thesis, described in other studies, that there was indeed competition to announce the public image of the nurse by educational institutions. This study adds one more element beyond photographs of institutional or similar rites, namely, the cartoons.

This element, added to future discussions about the process of construction of the public image of the nurse, is the evidenced possibility of the image as a record and its contribution to the history of nursing and care, having in perspective the mastery of the history of visual culture.

Thinking about this aspect is to instigate new studies, either to ratify or refute crystallized assertions, as well as the possibility of constructing other versions and interpretations of the nurse's image trajectory and profession, whether national or international.

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