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CORRESPONDENTE

US vs. THEM:  
A Critical Analysis of *Superman – Peace on Earth*

Por

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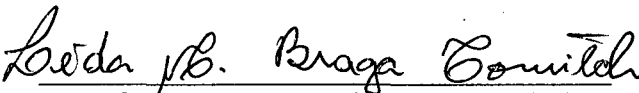
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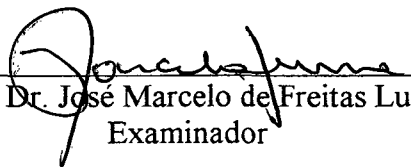
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Para meu irmão, com quem  
compartilhei as alegrias da minha  
infância. Também, à memória de José  
Magalhães Dourado e Carlos Freire  
Veloso, meus avós.

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Anyway, names are necessary, definitely. So, here we go. First of all, I would like to thank Zé Luiz for accepting to advise me in this work. It was a peaceful pleasure working with him.

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At the bottom of everything I do, is God. He has always been there for me. I have no words to express how thankful I am to Thee.

## ABSTRACT

US vs. THEM:  
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *SUPERMAN - PEACE ON EARTH*

FRANCISCO OSVANILSOM DOURADO VELOSO

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

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Supervisor: José Luiz Meurer

In this thesis I investigate textual and graphic aspects of the comic book *Superman–Peace on Earth*, in order to undress ideological views grounded in the representation it makes of reality and how it might contribute to shaping the reality of the reader, foregrounding possible relations of power which might be implicit in the text. It is based on the premise that discourse has a bi-directional relationship with social structure (Fairclough, 1992). Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Semiotics provide the theoretical foundations to support this study. In order to reach my aim, I analyze images and words at different stages, applying appropriate theoretical tools for each aspect of this multi-modal text. Concerning images, I draw upon Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) conceptual representations and interpersonal meanings as investigation devices. As for words, I make use of the lexicogrammatical system of transitivity as proposed by Halliday (1994). Ideological perspectives are borrowed from van Dijk (2001, 1998, 1995), who contributes to this research with in-group vs. out-group proposition – Us vs. Them – which is used as a means to unveil ideological strategies. In my data, the in-group comprises the United States of America, while the out-group is composed of countries located in Africa, East Europe and South America. The findings of this research show that there is a disposition to emphasize positive aspects regarding the in-group and negative aspects concerning the out-group. Negative properties in respect to the in-group are de-emphasized, while positive characteristics are de-emphasized in the out-group. On that account, the text portrays the in-group and the out-group in a relation of inequality and oversimplifies complex social issues. This study intends to contribute to the awareness of biased use of popular culture texts in contemporary society.

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## RESUMO

'US vs. THEM':  
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *SUPERMAN – PEACE ON EARTH*

FRANCISCO OSVANILSOM DOURADO VELOSO

UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA

2002

Orientador: José Luiz Meurer

Nesta dissertação investigo aspectos gráficos e textuais na história em quadrinhos (HQ) *Superman – Peace on Earth*, objetivando revelar pontos-de-vista ideológicos inseridos na representação que esta HQ faz da realidade, e como tal representação pode contribuir para a construção da realidade do leitor. Este estudo baseia-se na relação bi-direcional do discurso em relação à estrutura social (Fairclough, 1992), utilizando o suporte teórico da Análise Crítica do Discurso e Semiótica. A análise do texto foi realizada em dois estágios diferentes: primeiramente, foi realizada a análise imagética e, em seguida, a análise lexical. Representações conceituais e significados interpessoais conforme proposto por Kress e van Leeuwen (1996) foram utilizados como ferramentas teóricas na investigação de imagens. No que se refere ao léxico, foi utilizado o sistema de transitividade de Halliday (1994). Teorias sobre ideologia baseiam-se em van Dijk (2001, 1998, 1995), que contribui principalmente com a noção de “in-group” e “out-group” (NÓS x ELES), que é utilizada como um meio de expor estratégias ideológicas. O “in-group” é composto pelos Estados Unidos da América, enquanto que o “out-group” é formado por países na África, Leste Europeu e América do Sul. Os resultados desta pesquisa mostram que há, nesta HQ, uma disposição para enfatizar aspectos positivos em relação ao “in-group” e aspectos negativos referentes ao “out-group”. Além disso, há uma tendência a minimizar aspectos negativos relativos ao “in-group”, enquanto o processo inverso ocorre em relação ao “out-group”, onde aspectos são minimizados ao longo da narrativa. Dessa forma, pode-se verificar que o texto retrata o “in-group” e o “out-group” de forma desigual e também simplifica complexas questões sociais.

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# Chapter 1

## The research

### 1.0 Introduction

Super-hero comic books are an original form of art manifestation produced in the United States of America and consumed in different parts of the world, including Brazil as one of the main consumers of this medium outside the USA. Comic books started to be produced in the early 1930s and the release of *Action Comics No. 1* in June, 1938, presenting Superman to the world, is a landmark in the comic books market (Harvey, 1996). Its appearance took place during the Great Depression that devastated the North-American economy, and the medium was substantially affected by the intricate social context which it was inserted in, denouncing that, similarly to other sorts of art manifestation, super-hero comic books have also embedded, in their narrative, cultural and ideological values from the society which produces them.

Importance has been given to language in the construction of our identity and, as postulated by Meurer, it is in social interaction that people make use of language and consequently “reproduce, challenge or alter social structures” (2000, p. 3)<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the author argues that “our knowledge and beliefs, our identity, our social relationship and our own lives are, to a great extent, determined by the texts to which we are exposed and the ones we produce” (2000, p.3). Similarly, Robbins argues that the way we see and interpret the world is “mediated, controlled or filtered through other media” (1993, p.50), such as language. Nevertheless, the role played by language goes far beyond the function of mediation. As claimed by Sapir, “specific languages serve not only as a medium of communication but also to define and guide our perception of experiences” (Robbins, 1993, p. 51).

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<sup>1</sup> My translation

This complex role of language may be examined in printed communication such as super-hero comic books. Produced by writers and cartoonists who might not even meet each other during the process of production<sup>2</sup>, comic books are composed of words and images, which co-exist in a dialectical relationship. Words and images complement each other in order to convey the message to the reader, turning this genre into a unique cultural manifestation that is worthy of being critically examined in depth. When compared to other genres, the amount of critical studies available that make use of comics as an object of investigation is rather small. It was only in the early 1950s that the medium was first criticized. During the cultural repressed years of the MacCarthyism, when all forms of cultural manifestation were severely censored, the most prominent critic for comics was the psychiatrist Frederic Wertham, whose influence upon the medium will be discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.3).

In an attempt to contribute to the critical research on comics this study aims at investigating ideological aspects embedded in the narrative of the comic book *Superman: Peace on Earth* by Alex Ross and Paul Dini (1999). This title has been chosen due to the fact that it portrays Superman acting upon reality, as he visits several different countries around the world, providing a particular point of view regarding poor countries in South America, Africa and East Europe. Also, because it seems to depict rather clearly the model Superman seems to represent: that one of the good North-American citizen who looks after the others. In addition, the motivation for choosing Superman as my focus of study lies in the fact that this character is regarded as a benchmark for the super-hero comic book and also one of the foremost icons in the comic-book industry, having directly contributed to the creation of other famous characters such as Batman, Wonder Woman, Green Lantern and Flash.

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<sup>2</sup> Wonder Woman and Elektra, for instance, were drawn by Mike Deodato in João Pessoa and sent to the USA to be merged with narrative (Rodrigo, 1996).

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

Taking into consideration the statement made by Halliday that “language enables human beings to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them” (1985, p.106) and also Fairclough’s observation that “discourse (spoken or written language use) is shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels” (1992, p.64), it is possible to infer that comic books might also influence readers’ worldview, insofar as the medium carries in its narrative a representation of reality.

Based on the premise that discourse has a bi-directional relationship with social structure (Fairclough, 1992), I aim at investigating textual, graphic and ideological aspects embedded in *Superman – Peace on Earth*. In my investigation I attempt to answer the following questions:

1. What conceptual values do images have in the pictorial part of the text?
2. What ideational values do processes (explained in section 1.4.3) have in the written part of the text?
3. How are the different countries depicted in *Superman – Peace on Earth* ideologically represented in this super-hero comic book?

The answer to these questions is an attempt to reveal implicit assumptions that might be found in the text, enacting a “fit between text and the world” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 78).

### 1.2 Significance of the research

The main justification of this study is the lack of critical material regarding comic books. This work intends to look at the medium from a different perspective: that of comics as a popular cultural device which carries ideological representations, insofar as they make use

of language, which reproduces and alters social structures, as postulated by Meurer (2000) in a previous quotation. This work has a multidisciplinary perspective, as I apply Critical Discourse Analysis, Functional Grammar and Semiotics as investigative tools.

This research intends to provide a reflection on how ideology is embedded in a “marginalized channel of communication held by many to be an irredeemably corrupt and corrupting form of discourse, or else suitable only for children and the semi-literate” (Reynolds, 1992, p. 7). In that manner, it aims at contributing to the increase of a critical awareness of the researcher (myself), language teachers, scholars and students towards the medium, and how it might influence the way readers perceive reality.

### 1.3 Theoretical background

Considering that comic texts are composed of words and image, we need to examine each one of these dimensions, applying different tools as well as different theories. In view of it, I will dilute the theoretical review regarding each component in the respective chapters of analysis, instead of presenting them altogether under a ‘review of literature’ heading. For that reason, I will expose briefly the theories that will support my analysis.

#### 1.3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

When introducing his model of discourse analysis Fairclough sets up a framework which merges together “linguistically-oriented discourse analysis and social and political thought relevant to discourse and language” (1992, p. 62). The author postulates that this combination derives from the fact that discourse should be seen as a type of social practice. Fairclough supports this proposition by arguing that discourse is “a mode of action, one form in which people may act upon the world and especially upon each other, as well as a mode of representation” (1992, p. 63). An important implication of this argument is that it establishes a

“dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). Consequently, discourse is seen as playing a crucial role in the construction of social identities and subject positions, as well as contributing to the construction of “social relationships between people (...) and to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64).

It is based on this dialectical relationship that Fairclough proposes a three-dimensional conception of discourse: social practice, discursive practice (production, distribution, consumption) and text (1992, pp. 72-73). According to the author this framework is an endeavor to merge three analytical theories, namely “the tradition of close textual and linguistic analysis within linguistics, the macrosociological tradition of analyzing social practice in relation to social structures, and the interpretivist (...) tradition of seeing social practice as something which people actively produce and make sense of on the basis of shared commonsense procedures” (1992, p. 72).

The generator of this research project was, to a certain extent, the three-dimensional model proposed by Fairclough, mainly the notion of text as social practice. Such a model led me to realize that, even though an increasing number of genre studies have been carried out in the last few years, we have to deal with a lack of studies aiming at the analysis of comic books and the relationship of this popular medium with the social environment in which it is produced.

### 1.3.2 Comic books

Scott McCloud’s *Understanding comics – the invisible art* is, to a certain degree, quite general in its attempt to make an analysis of comic books. Though the author does not apparently intend to exhaust the issue, the book provides the reader with an excellent point of view regarding the relationship between words and icons which certainly deserves further

studies. Furthermore, the book has proved to be a good starting point in studying comic books as it presents important concepts about the means of communication used in them, such as the use of color, time and frames.

The book *The art of the comic book – an aesthetic history* by Robert C. Harvey provides the reader with an accurate description of the history of comic books since the 1930s up to the early nineties. Therefore, it will be used to support the historical background necessary for the contextualization of *Superman – Peace on Earth*.

A valuable historical source, Savage Jr. (1990), will be the basis for the overview I will present in Chapter 2. Inge (1990) will provide insights regarding the cultural role of comics and history as well.

### 1.3.3 Images

Barthes, attempting to explain what the content of the photographic message is, postulates that a photograph portrays reality by itself, even though there is “a reduction in proportion, perspective and color” (1977, p. 17). The author also argues that there is no need for any code between the object and its image in view of the fact that the image “is its perfect *analogon* and it is exactly this analogical perfection which, to common sense, defines the photograph” (1977, p.17). Therefore, a photograph “is a message without a code” (Barthes, 1977, p. 17), a concept which can be applied to drawings, paintings, cinema, theater and comic books *vis-à-vis* images.

Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) will provide the theoretical background for examining potential meanings in images. The authors propose a set of features which should be taken into consideration when analyzing an image, such as Conceptual representations and interpersonal meanings, which will be further developed in Chapter 3.



### 1.3.4 Transitivity

Halliday claims that besides “being a mode of action, of giving and demanding goods-&-services and information, the clause is also a mode of reflection, of imposing order on the endless variation and flow of events” (1994, p. 106). Therefore, I intend to study aspects of lexicogrammar applying the concept of transitivity proposed by Halliday (1994). The author postulates that “the transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of PROCESS TYPES” (1994, p. 106), namely relational, mental and material processes, which are the three main kinds of processes. I will also investigate the agents and the circumstances related to these processes. The work of Eggins (1994) will also be used in the investigation and interpretation of the meanings of transitivity.

### 1.4 Organization of the dissertation

In Chapter 2 I will present a historical overview of super-hero comic book since its origins, in the 1930s, giving particular emphasis to the war and post-war period, when the genre endured several changes that gave rise to a severe censorship. This overview will help to demonstrate the position Superman has occupied in the history of the medium.

In Chapter 3 I will explore the potential meanings of a set of pictures selected from the text. In this chapter I will review the literature regarding discourse and ideology, text and image, besides Kress & van Leeuwen’s tools for reading images that I will apply in this study.

In Chapter 4 I will examine aspects of lexicogrammar applying Halliday’s transitivity system as a form of corroborating the discussion I will carry out in Chapter 3. I will start the chapter by presenting the theoretical background regarding transitivity, which will support the data analysis that will follow the theoretical review.

Finally, the conclusions of this study will be presented in Chapter 5, discussing the general implications of lexicon and image analysis altogether. Along with it, I present some

considerations for future research in the field of language, semiotics, society and comics as a form of popular culture.

## Chapter 2

### A historical overview of super-hero comic books in the USA

#### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter aims at recounting briefly the history of comic books in the USA, departing from the very beginning, in the 1930s, up to the present. For the sake of clarity, such history was divided into two periods: before and after the end of World War II, due to the great influence this period exerted on the medium. As comic books were quite different in their early years, both in art and narrative, anyone studying the medium in the present cannot overlook the past, to the extent that it would prevent the inquirer from understanding its evolution along the years and the explicit role of society in the changes undergone by the comics. Therefore, the past is brought into light as a form of understanding the present, as well as recovering how Superman, an object of study in this work, is related to the history of the medium. During this review I intend to include a critical perspective of facts. However, such criticism is limited due to the lack of wider range of critical works and also because I do not have original issues for further examination at my disposal.

#### 2.1 From the beginning to the war years.

Newspaper strips were a popular mechanism of culture transmission at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, before 1929, they used to be called 'funnies', as they portrayed life and everyday situations in a humorous way. However, after the economic crash of 1929 in the USA, they lost their amusing flavor as the prospects of daily life seemed rather uncertain (Savage Jr., 1990).

In the late 1920s *Tarzan* and *Buck Rogers* made their first appearance on newspaper comic strip pages, followed by other titles such as *Dick Tracy* and *The Phantom*. Their stories would take the reader to exotic places, present unusual characters and would not hold quite

any humor, or simply no humor at all. The comical property of the newspaper strips was replaced by an escapism that permeated the genre throughout the 1930s, considering that the years of Depression were too difficult to be dealt with and, hence, too hard to be focused on. Therefore, the genre would mostly concentrate in the past or the future (Savage Jr., 1990) and the reader would be taken somewhere else, far away from the problems of real life and, as the years went by, such stories grew in popularity “fueling escapist fantasies for the economically distressed” (Savage Jr., 1990, p.5).

The first comic books emerged in this environment and consequently manifested the same emphases on escapism, inasmuch as comic books were, at first, just a reprint of newspaper strips which had already been published. This reprinting feature would change in the late 30s, when more and more original material started to be published. The publication of *Detective Comics* (1937) and *Super Comics* (1938) brought a thematic change and they would also be the precursors to what would be later known as the ‘golden age’ of comic books, which had its dawn in 1938, with the publication of *Action Comics #1*. This publication brought the first story of Superman, a character that “would assure the success of the comic book and establish the basic pattern for what would largely constitute the subject matter of thousands of comic books to come” (Inge, 1990, p.140).

Before Superman, there had been heroes such as Dick Tracy, the Phantom or Tarzan, but the man of steel would give rise to a new formula for comic adventure stories – the super-hero formula. Albeit rather ordinary in comic books at the present time, super-powered heroes were not so in the 1930s. Created by Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster in 1934, the story of Superman in *Action Comics #1* was not an immediate success. In the first few months it would sell satisfactorily but about a year after it was selling about 1.250.000 copies a month (Harvey, 1996).

*Action comics #1* was a selection of comic strips which Siegel and Shuster had never been able to publish and as a consequence of this patchwork of strips, the narrative flow was quite cumbersome, lacking unit at times (Reynolds, 1992). The first page would provide a brief explanation of who Superman was, where he came from and present a scientific explanation for his powers, which were quite limited in the very beginning, if compared to what the man of steel is able to do nowadays. At the start, he had only exceptional strength that would allow him to leap at great distances, lift heavy objects easily and run at great speed. The scientific explanation correlated his abilities with that of an ant and a grasshopper on Earth, as the former can raise objects several times their weight and the latter can leap great distances, in order to show that such powers could be real, denoting that, in those early days, imagination and creativity were restrained by the ordeals of reality. Later, different powers and more elements would be added to the character, such as the ability to fly, the x-ray vision, and a name would be given to his native planet: Krypton. In 1986 his origin would be re-told and include, all at once, those elements that are known today.

However, the only feature that has not changed over the years is Superman's attitude. In *Batman – The Dark Knight Returns* (Miller, 1997) Superman plays the role of a hero acting in conformity with the current laws, playing the Government agent who tries to bring order into chaos, but alienated from the fact that the institution he stands for is the primary source of chaos. In *Kingdom Come* (Waid & Ross, 1997), the man of steel is the mediator of an ideological conflict between order and chaos, this time represented by Wonder Woman and, once more, Batman, respectively. In sum, Superman has been usually depicted as that kind of restrained hero who is always for the government, never positioning himself on the other side of law.

In spite of looking pretty much as a blueprint of a super-hero as we know today, *Superman* was, in the late 1930s, powerful enough to sell thousands of comics every month

and generate the creation (usually by imitation) of many others. In 1939 *Batman* came out to the public as a counterpart of *Superman*. The new hero had no super-powers but relied on a brilliant mind and superior athletic skills (Reynolds, 1992). After *Batman* many other super-heroes would be created, partially due to the huge success of *Superman* and also motivated by the mood of the current world affairs. World War II played an important role in the process of establishment of comic books as popular culture. Still an infant, the genre had its profits from the war in two ways. First, functioning as an instrument of nationalist encouragement, many patriotic characters emerged, such as *Captain America*, in 1940, and *Uncle Sam*, a very peculiar hero, first published by National Comics in July, 1941 (Savage Jr., 1990). Second, the possibility of ideological propaganda allied to a medium of quick consumption resulted in sending comic books to soldiers in the front, as they would alternate idle days with periods of inactivity. Allied, these two factors urged the super-hero comic book into a fast process of maturity, contributing to its establishment as a new form of art, and not merely a fad. Probably because they also aimed at being consumed by the servicemen in the front, by 1945 the art of the comics had attained a sexual orientation (Savage Jr., 1990).

Amongst all the characters created in the war period, *Captain America* was probably one of the most prominent heroes. He was a North-American soldier who, on duty in war, accepted to take part of an experiment that intended to create super-soldiers. He was injected a substance that would bestow upon him enormous strength and agility. However, right after receiving the substance, there was an accident that prevented others from obtaining it and *Captain America* became one of a kind. Dressed with the colors of the USA flag, he would have as his main enemy the nazis, his stories being highly connected with war issues. Because comic books were sent to the front, their popularity grew immensely, creating the need for more characters to be consumed, and bearing in mind that super-hero comic books seem to rely a lot on imitation, other characters quite similar to *Captain America* appeared: *American*

*Avenger, American Crusader, American Eagle, Commando Yank, Fighting Yank, Yank and Doodle, Yankee Boy, Yankee Eagle, Yankee Doodle Jones, the Liberator, the Sentinel, the Scarlet Sentry, Flagman, Captain Flag, Captain Freedom, Captain Courageous, Captain Glory, Captain Red Cross, Captain Valiant, Captain Victory* (Harvey, 1996), all of them heroes fighting for freedom and justice on behalf of the USA.

Superman's stories were not directly connected with world war affairs but that did not prevent him from being considered the greatest American hero. According to Engle, among all the legendary figures that are part of the North-American folklore, only Superman "achieves truly mythic stature, interweaving a pattern of beliefs, literary conventions and cultural traditions of the American people more powerfully and more accessibly than any other cultural symbol of the 20<sup>th</sup> century" (1987, p.80). The man of steel seemed to carry these attributes since the very beginning and during the war years he would consolidate the role of defender of truth, justice and the American way.

## 2.2 Comics in the post-war USA

After the second great war, comics headed into new realms. The atomic blasting in Japan, allied to the growth of Communism provoked considerable changes in the arguments used in comics. Subsequently, other historical events would contribute to the development, popularity, a later decline and the current stagnation of comics as a form of art. In this section, I intend to delineate the trajectory of comics from the end of the war up to the present, highlighting important historical events which influenced the medium.

### 2.2.1 The atomic bomb and Communism

World War II ended in 1945, but comics continued to explore the topic afterwards. Nevertheless, after a two-year period, the medium experimented a fall in sales (Reynolds,

1992), as it apparently had gone dry in narrative possibilities, considering that the war provided arguments for the stories. Some characters, such as Captain America, functioned as a vehicle for war propaganda (Harry, 1996) and, as the war had long ended, lost their meaning. Hence, it was not possible for publishers to simply ignore the recent events, and that seemed to be an appropriate moment to reconsider and adjust the focus.

The Nagasaki and Hiroshima bombing by the North Americans in 1945 had turned into futility the escapism of the 1930s and its revival seemed incoherent. Comic books producers, likewise people in other popular culture mediums had to understand what the USA had become and they had to deal with the atomic bomb. After all, who would need a Superman if, with the power of such a destructive bomb, Americans had become sort of super-men? Surrounded by a new reality, the 'golden age' of super-hero comic books would last up to the late 1940s, giving place to a new sort of comics that would reflect and interpret more appropriately the current social events. If, during the war, 90% of the characters in *Detective Comics* had been super-heroes, this rate slowly decreased and, by the end of the decade, it reached a percentage of only 50% (Harvey, 1996). Throughout this period when super-hero comics were slowly cast aside, only Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman continued to be published, while all the other heroes had their titles canceled due to low sales.

For many North Americans the justifications for making use of the atomic bomb were questionable. One of the arguments used by the Federal Government was based on the life of many North-American soldiers who had been saved, in detriment of the massive destruction that took place in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. For those who were uncertain of the bombing validity, the USA had become similar to the enemies as they had promoted a slaughter at similar proportions. On the other hand, many people conceived the possession of such a power as a gift from God that could just be granted to the most prominent Christian nation on



earth. Anyhow, the bomb served to demonstrate the preeminence of North-American science and technology in a world devastated by the second great war.

The arguments provided by bureaucrats were not enough to promote cultural acceptance of the bombing but, in spite of that, a process of normalization of the abnormal began. Comic books played an important role in it, considering that “culture functions to systematize values” (Savage Jr., 1990, p.15). Moreover, the ignorance of North Americans, as they had no information whether scientists had an accurate idea of the consequences of the bombing or whether the president knew what he was doing, allied to the supposition of what would have happened if Japan had won the war, a more outrageous possibility for the North Americans, helped to ease the process of normalization.

By 1949 the Russians already had their atomic bomb as well and, in the USA, people started fearing that the Godless Communists would attack the country. That was a new reality and culture had to adapt itself to make it at least bearable. In face of it a sort of folklore began to be developed around the bomb, which was part of the process of normalization I have already mentioned above. Comic books for young readers started to grant the bomb with friendly, funny and harmless attributes, such as a bomb that could transport characters from one place to the other, for instance. For older readers, the subject of the bomb would be dealt with in a more serious manner, but always indicating that it would be harmful to the enemies of North Americans but harmless to them, reinforcing the image that the good guys would always win, even if the bad guys had the same technological apparatus.

As a form of enlightenment of this antagonistic relationship between good and bad guys and how the former prevails over the latter, Savage Jr. (1990) briefly recounts the plot of *Atomic War! #1*, published in November 1952 and which proves to be rather present-day, as one may notice in the excerpt below:

The first issue of *Atomic War!*, dated November 1952, bore a cover depicting the destruction of New York and offered a three-part story (set in 1960) that began with a Russian sneak attack on the United States, proceeded to the Russian invasion of Western Europe, and concluded

with the launching of a retaliatory strike on the Soviet Union from a secret American bomber base in Greenland. According to the story line, the Russian were bald-faced liars who, through wicked Commie guile, managed a reprise of Pearl Harbor. Albeit on a much larger scale; and for this they would have to pay dearly, since one may not destroy America simply by blowing up a number of major cities and killing a few million people. (Savage Jr., 1990, p.19)

The lines above reveal a bit of the peculiar form the USA see and place themselves in the world. The medium has not the same influence of newspapers and television, for instance, but seems to legitimize past, present and future acts. The USA joined the Allies in World War II due to the insulting massacre in Pearl Harbor. Similarly, they have launched a war against terrorism as North Americans were, again, insulted by having cities in their country attacked, in 2001. It should be pointed out that the North-American government and, consequently, USA citizens, still make use of the good Christian guy argument to validate their military actions.

As possibilities of conflicts with the Axis<sup>1</sup> had exhausted, comic book artists and editors needed a new set of characters to establish the conflict between good and evil which is so commonly found in most adventure comic books, particularly in super-hero comic books. As society feared an attack by the Communists with war technology of the same kind, North-American editors of the medium (as well as other media, such as cinema) elected the Russians to play the bad guys, which contributed to the spread and maintenance of antagonist values between Russians and North Americans. Establishing the difference of moral values seemed to be appropriate in case of a bombing, since the North-American people would already have a negative view of the conceivable opponent in a nuclear war. Later, China would also be granted its own role in comic books, after the revolution, together with Korea, that would be referred to in comics as “stooges” (Savage Jr., 1990, p.51) of Soviet Union. At that time, the ideological conflict between these two groups was overtly found in the stories of North-American agents or soldiers that would, mostly with the help of one or two more people,

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<sup>1</sup> The countries, including Germany, Italy, and Japan, who fought together during the second war against the Allies, which included Britain, France, Russia and the USA.

dismantle malign plans of the Communists, expressing the feeling of superiority that permeated the North Americans with regards to the 'Commies' and that would be promoted through comics.

### 2.2.2 The good (cow)boys and social values

Another sort of popular hero in the early 1950s were the cowboys and it is likely that they have never been as popular as in that decade. Cowboys seemed to be the opposite of the Communists, whether Russian, Chinese or Korean, and embodied values worth reproducing, typifying the "American who did what good Americans were supposed to do" (Savage Jr., 1990, p.68). Besides dealing with ordinary problems the Western heroes would also fight against drugs or any other social issue in evidence, which suggests that the arguments for the stories were tightly connected with the sociopolitical context of the period. However, after the Korean War had come to an end, Communism started to seem less attractive for comic-book writers and editors and the cowboys were left alone to fade away with the predicaments of everyday life. It is feasible to argue that Superman had, years before, already provided the model for this good North-American guy, the lone boy-scout, as both characters resemble in attitude.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, comic books functioned as a vehicle for maintaining and promoting the social values "in face of a few unthinkable things, including atomic war and/or Communist takeover of the United States" (Savage Jr., 1990, p.74). The medium was able to deal with current issues such as crime and drugs, but a complete failure when pointing to the solutions, probably because readers had no interest in the mundane, and displeasing readers would pose economic restraints to the medium. Therefore, reality would be used as a springboard from which to jump, and then the necessary distortions would be made in order to keep sales in a good rate. Comic books would define the USA not only by what was shown, but also by what was not displayed about them or, simply, by what was presented regarding

other countries. This last strategy would place the USA in an opposing pole vis-a-vis other nations, a feature which is found in *Superman: Peace on Earth*, where social issues, such as poverty, in South America, Africa and East Europe is overtly and repeatedly presented to the viewer. It should be pointed out that those distortions were based on stereotypes. Girls, for instance, would usually be represented as fragile, somehow dependent on external help, such as Lois Lane, the long-time Superman's girlfriend and now wife. Even though she had a profession she would usually depend on the man of steel to get out of trouble. This would happen because writers, artists and editors were men and their vision of the world would prevail (Savage Jr., 1990), considering that they were inserted in a predominantly male society. As a result, comic books portrayed sexist stories, as well as racism, always representing Caucasian people in a position of superiority over black or foreign people (Savage Jr. 1990).

### 2.2.3 Entertainment Comics and social criticism

In this process of distortion of reality comics of the horror-suspense genre were one of the most conspicuous. They presented yarns abundant in violence but attempting to show that violent, lunatic people could be everywhere, such as Communists, in a decadent post-war society. Published by Entertainment Comics (henceforth, EC), these stories are regarded as "the supreme works of the Golden Age of comic books. (...) Among innovations the EC staff brought into comic book art were the use of highly literate and stylistically effective narrative captions" (Inge, 1990, p.117) that dealt with current social affairs of the North-American society in a rather distinct manner, as in the example below:

(...) a man decapitated a nurse (whose negligence had led to the death of his son), his business partner (whose corrupt practices had brought him to financial ruin), his maiden aunt (who had refused him the money to pay his business debts), his wife (who was having an affair with his best friend), and (naturally) his best friend – and then held a dinner party for the headless corpses, announcing his conclusion that people who did not use their noggins were clearly people who did not need them (Savage Jr., 1990, p.81)

Similarly, the EC comic books of the crime genre would depict reality through more pungent lenses. Policemen were usually posed in a derogatory perspective, being even worse than criminals, at times, opposing the heroes who saved the day against Communists. Crime was not said to pay, but in many situations it seemed to pay quite well. Therefore, crime comic books intended to indicate the ineffectiveness of law by demonstrating the extension of criminality. Savage Jr. regards comic books in that post-war era as “male-initiated, male-oriented critiques of individuals and institutions that tended to reinforce such notions as black and female inferiority and to limn, purposely or not, a white, middle-class culture stressed nearly to the breaking point, beset by psychotics and criminals, and possessed of remedies that were only partially viable” (1990, p.82-83). The social criticism embedded in the sometimes grotesque comic stories of the early 1950s attempted to show that lunatics, psychotics and criminals could be everywhere, disguised as ordinary citizens in everyday life, as the medium had done before with the Communists. The difference is that, before and during the war, North-American society would be depicted indirectly, by contrasting it with Russian, Chinese or Korean society. However, in that post-war period, comics would look inward and portray society in an outrageous and ludicrous manner, raising fierce criticisms towards the medium.

#### 2.2.4 Criticism about comics

After the war, social problems such as crime, drugs and homosexuality started to call the attention of the government, which started to investigate the causes. By 1954 the USA, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy, was immersed in a frenzied hunt for Communists which could be infiltrated in the government, labor unions and in the cultural industry, mainly the film industry. Concurrently, Senator Estes Kefauver was in charge of investigating what had been

considered “the worse form of subversion – the seduction of the innocent minds by the comic book industry” (Inge, 1990, p.117). In the early 40s comic books had already been seen with some caution by educators, specially of elementary school. However, the times of war restricted criticism on comics to the academic world and only in the late 40s a few critics brought the discussion to a wider social sphere. The most prominent critic supporting this hypothesis that comics had a subversive character was Fredric Wertham, a psychiatrist from New York who postulated that juvenile delinquency was the offspring of a long exposure to the medium. In 1954 he published the book *Seduction of the Innocent*, the result of a seven year study about the effects of comics to the mind of young readers (Reynolds, 1992).

Wertham’s criticisms caught the attention of the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee, which had been created in 1953 aiming at investigating the causes of juvenile transgression. Savage Jr. sustains the argument that Wertham was more an opportunist than a duty-bound psychiatrist, classifying *Seduction of the Innocent* as “pompous, polemical, biased, and poorly documented” (1990, p.96). Among the cause-effect exposition to the medium, Wertham endorsed the proposition that Batman and Robin stories were involved with a homoerotic atmosphere and that Wonder Woman would be Batman’s counterpart, as she would possess a lesbian appeal. The psychiatrist would emphasize important matters, such as explicit violence, but would neglect those which could jeopardize the arguments defended. He would accuse comics of being racist or sexist but would never point out to the criticism that *Shock Suspenstories*, a horror-suspense EC publication, made about these social matters. It is true, however, that this comic book as well as many others would abound in violence and sex, for instance, providing the necessary amount of information Wertham needed to bolster his thesis. Nevertheless, despite the fierce attacks on super-heroes, the psychiatrist never directed criticisms towards Disney’s characters, and in fact would classify them as innocuous (Savage Jr., 1990), even though a few years later Dorfman and Mattelart (1980) would show us that

Donald and his troop were not so innocuous and were subject to a further examination. Anyhow, due to Wertham's continuous assaults on comics, publishers decided to create the Comics Code Authority (see Appendix 1), "the most stringent set of prohibitions applied to any mass media" (Inge, 1990, p.118), in order to regulate the medium before the Senate did it, which was indeed Wartham's intent.

This code would determine what should be and, most importantly, what should not be portrayed in comic books. It would prohibit from 1954 on any sort of explicit violence, nudism or any sort of sexual reference and would pose strict rules on the depiction of crime, preventing any sort of exaltation of criminal acts. Moreover, agents of law should not be represented in situations that would foster disrespect towards them. Most importantly, it determined that good should always prevail over evil and perpetrators should be punished. A stamp was created for parental advice purposes and, once placed on the cover of a comic book, it would indicate that that publication was in conformity with the code. The aftermath of this regulation device on the medium was remarkable and posed the necessity to put it on new tracks.

As a consequence, sale rates were highly affected and titles such as *Shock Suspenstories* were cancelled as its content had been totally banned. By 1956 the number of titles on sale had been drastically reduced as a consequence of the austere regulations and industry found its way out of bankruptcy on "costumed superheroes, thinking them to be morally acceptable to an apprehensive public and, beyond that, economically viable" (Savage Jr., 1990, p.100).

The costumed superheroes had given place, in the late 1940s, to the crime, western and horror comics and, ironically, it was the downfall of the latter that revitalized the former. During the early 50s only *Superman*, *Batman* and *Wonder Woman*, all of them Detective Comics (or simply, DC) had been published without interruption. In face of the current

changes, *Flash* was brought back in 1956, followed by the *Green Lantern* in 1959 and the creation of a new heroine, *Supergirl*. Marvel Comics returned to the superhero market presenting the reader with titles that would become famous world-wide: *The Fantastic Four* (1961), *Spider-Man* (1963) and the *X-Men* (1964), to mention some of the most important ones (Reynolds, 1992). This would mark the beginning of the 'silver age' for the comic books market, which would last up to the early 1980s, when the Comics Code had gotten stale. As a consequence, publishers such as DC and Marvel Comics started to release comic books without the parental advice stamp and display a 'Suggested for Mature Readers' advice. According to Reynolds, some comic publishers believe that the medium has gone too far and that might cause a "Wertham-like backlash against explicit violence and sexuality" (1992, p.9).

#### 2.2.5 Current events

Nevertheless, such backlash has not happened up to the present time, and super-hero comic books have striven to survive in the face of low sale rates. Perhaps as a strategy to overcome the long-term crisis in sales Joe Quesada, the editor-in-chief of Marvel Comics, has decided not to follow the Comics Code rules. The aftermath of such decision can be seen in canonical titles such as *X-Force #116*, where explicit violence has been shown in pictures full of guts and blood, and sexual connotations long banned from comics are displayed, as in the example below.

DC Comics, Superman's publisher, has not taken the same attitude toward the Comics Code up to the present. However, the number of publications without the code stamp and that are said to aim at an adult readership has increased, revealing the effort comics publishers have made in order to attract older readers, appealing to more "mature themes" (Harvey,



1996, p.25), such as crime, violence and current social issues. *Batman – War on Crime* and *Superman - Peace on Earth*, for instance, epitomize this mature-theme type of comic book.



Figure 2.1: long prohibited scenes of explicit violence are back<sup>2</sup>

### 2.3 *Superman – Peace on Earth.*

This comic book is one of a kind. It is the first title of a series of comics that bring the most famous characters of DC Comics dealing with contemporary social affairs. Superman's edition was followed by *Batman – War on Crime* (1999), *Captain Marvel – Power of Hope*

<sup>2</sup> Source information for figures are listed on page ix.

(2000) and more recently *Wonder Woman – Spirit of Truth* (2001). These comics might be also referred to as a graphic novel, which were created in the mid-1980s and would not strictly follow the Comics Code Authority. They usually receive a special treatment regarding printing, as well as in art and are in accordance with the following definition:

The most useful distinction in comics is to be drawn between periodical and book-style publication. A periodical is comprised of issues, one of which always replaces the previous one. The title is continuous, but one issue always differs from another. A book is a publication in which the title and issue are the same. A new printing does not require abandoning the contents in favour of a new set. A graphic novel is unified comic art form that exploits the relationship between the two: book and periodical. (Edgell, 1992, as quoted in Reynolds, 1992, p.127)

As regards *Superman – Peace on Earth*, the extreme care is revealed mainly in art, produced by Alex Ross, a talented artist who is growing in popularity. Instead of simply drawing stories, he paints them as if in watercolor. The artist had his style established with *Kingdom Come* (Waid and Ross, 1997), a four-issue series published by DC Comics. At that occasion, his name would appear in second place, whereas the writer Mark Waid would come first. Nevertheless, *Peace on Earth* displays the opposite. The artist's name comes first, followed by the name of the writer, Paul Dini, suggesting that the visual code prevails over the written.

The story starts with a brief overview of the origins of Superman and how he was brought up, on earth, by foster-parents in the countryside. Then, the action moves to the present, during Christmas time, the starting point of the story. There are no explicit dialogues among characters. Superman narrates the story, working as a first-person narrator, taking the reader literally inside his own mind.

Superman is downtown Metropolis fitting a huge Christmas tree when an incident calls his attention. There is a girl starving among the crowd. He takes her to a shelter where she would find appropriate assistance. The episode is the trigger for the story. After pondering about it for a couple of days, the man of steel decides to do something about the problem of hunger around the world, as a way of bringing peace to those in need.

In order to achieve his aim, Superman asks for the North-American Congress the authorization to harvest the surplus from the crops and take food to as many people as he can in one day. The mission takes Superman to several countries located in South America, Africa and East Europe.

In most of the places Superman goes to, he is welcomed with enthusiasm, if not for his red and blue image, for the food he brings with him. The hero repeats the action tirelessly, from one country to the other. In some countries, however, he does not have a warm reception, and attributes that to the intolerance of despots who do not allow the presence of an Ambassador of Peace on behalf of the North-American government.

Disillusioned by the attitude of those men who cannot understand the good will behind his acts, Superman ends his mission before reaching full accomplishment. The difficulties he has to face during his endeavor take him to reflect about its legitimacy. The hero comes to the conclusion that it is not by taking food to people that the problem with hunger will be solved. Instead, people should be taught how to obtain food, by planting the seeds. Actually, it intends to be a poetic metaphor, meaning that people should be taught to struggle for their own goods, and that they are like seeds. Some of them will grow, some will not, "but all of them deserve the chance to grow" (Ross & Dini, 1999, p.61)

#### 2.4 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter I have provided an overview of the history of comic books in order to understand how historical events that took place in the USA as well as abroad exerted a crucial role in the development of the medium. Moreover, it attempted to relate the events to the history of Superman, and how he was affected by them. Such overview is important for my research purposes as it contributes to understanding the privileged position this character holds in the medium world wide.

## CHAPTER 3

### Pictorial narrative

*“And you who wish to represent by words the form of man and all the aspects of his membrification, relinquish that idea. For the more minutely you describe the more you will confine the mind of the reader, and the more you will keep him from the knowledge of the thing described. And so it is necessary to draw and to describe”*

*Leonardo da Vinci*

#### 3.0 Introduction

My aim in this chapter is to examine representations of reality in selected images of the comic book *Superman – Peace on Earth*. Also, I intend to investigate interpersonal meanings in a smaller set of images which refer to Rio de Janeiro, in a specific section.

The concept of text postulated by Fairclough (1989) will be the starting point for my analysis of the images. According to Fairclough, “both the production of a text and the interpretation of a text have an interpretative character” (1989, p.80) and this interpretative property involves the producer and those involved in the text production as well as the target consumer, the reader. As images are part of the text in a comic book, they also contain an interpretation of the world that might reveal the perspective of the producer and consequently deserve closer examination. The ideological perspective based on van Dijk (1998, 2001), which I present in section 3.1 will work as a reference to discuss the results of the data analysis. The analysis of ideological perspectives is one of the main concerns of the third level of analysis in Fairclough’s model (section 3.2 below) and this dimension of analysis will also help with my investigation.

The procedure of dividing the text analysis into verbal and image analysis is based on Barthes (1977), who argues that words and images should be taken into consideration when examining pictures, whether narrative or not. McCloud (1993) also contributes with some theoretical perspective regarding the complexity of images in the narrative process. I will also

make use of the theoretical tools developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) in order to analyze formal features of the set of images I have selected for the analysis.

### 3.1 Discourse and ideology

Discourse is seen here as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1992) and, as I have pointed out in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1), it has an important role in the construction of identities. In respect to its dialectal relationship with social structure, Fairclough argues that discourse “is shaped and constrained by social structure in the widest sense and at all levels” and that it is also “socially constitutive, contributing to the constitution of all those dimensions of social structure which directly or indirectly shape and constrain it” (1992, p.63-64). Moreover, regarding world representation and signification, discourse interferes in the way reality is perceived as the former becomes “a version of the world, offered to, imposed on, enacted by, someone else” (Kress & Hodge, 1979, p. 9). Mediating everyday life, discourse functions as “the practical consciousness of (...) society” (Kress & Hodge, 1979, p. 6), which can also be referred to as ideology. Discourse works as a medium through which “we acquire, learn or change ideologies” (Kress & Hodge, 1979, p. 5).

The concept of ideology is a controversial one (van Dijk, 2001), despite the attention scholars have given to it since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the term was first used by Destutt de Tracy. Nevertheless, a definition which would fit the main interests of this study is the one provided by van Dijk, who argues that

ideologies are basic frameworks of social cognition, shared by members of social groups, constituted by relevant selections of sociocultural values, and organized by an ideological schema that represents the self definition of a group. Besides their social function of sustaining the interests of groups, ideologies have the cognitive function of organizing the social representations (attitudes, knowledge) of the group, and thus indirectly monitor the group-related social practices and hence also the text and talk of its members (van Dijk, 1995, p.248)

The study of ideology has been most commonly related to social sciences, politics and mass media. In those fields, it usually carries a negative meaning which might be referred to

as “false consciousness”, that is, “popular but misguided beliefs inculcated by the ruling class in order to legitimate the status quo and to conceal the real socioeconomic conditions of the workers” (van Dijk, 2001, p.4). Those beliefs allude to the identity, social position, interests and aims of a group and not of individuals, considering that ideologies are constituted of shared, social beliefs.

In light of the perspectives of ideology stated above it is feasible to argue that comic books also have their text production and social representations monitored by the social practices of a dominant group as the medium seems to hold an ideological schema that encompasses a self definition of the group it is aimed for consumption.

The ideology schema developed by van Dijk (2001) as a tool for unveiling ideological aspects embedded in discourse comprises six categories, and the representational aspect of discourse is one of them, namely *Position: What are the relationships with others?*. This category might be applied to the examination of the form a group makes use of discourse to talk about themselves and, as a consequence, expose how they see themselves and, if including other groups, how the other groups are perceived. Insofar as the structure of the categories proposed by van Dijk (2001) are theoretical, they are only valid when one aims at elucidating social practices, such as investigating forms of in-group–out-group polarization, that the author also refers to as the pronoun pair US x THEM.

As an addition to the discussion of the polarization US x THEM, van Dijk (2001) formulates 4 principles that he refers to as ideological square, which would be ideological strategies found in both spoken and written discourse:

- Emphasize positive things about Us.
- Emphasize negative things about Them.
- De-emphasize negative things about Us.
- De-emphasize positive things about Them.

In *Superman: Peace on Earth* this polarization US x THEM is arranged as follows: the USA is portrayed as a prosperous country, in accordance with the economic growth they have experienced in recent years. For instance, in 2000 the USA were responsible for the consumption of one-third of world imports and also spent five trillion dollars in stores, supermarkets and trips (Simonetti, Boscov & Galuppo, 2000). This wealthy society might be identified on the pages of *Peace on Earth* in the way people dress, or more explicitly when they can afford distributing food to poor countries. On the other hand, regarding the poor countries apparently located in East Europe, South America and Africa which are depicted in the comic book, people are portrayed both in words and images as hopeless and impotent in face of the poverty that surrounds them.

The adoption of such perspective, even supposing that it has been an unconscious process, contributes to the idea that the USA is a better place to live and, at the same time, lowers the status of those people depicted in the out-group. Fairclough, when conceptualizing ideology, states that “ideologies embedded in discursive practices are most effective when they become naturalized, and achieve the status of ‘common sense’” (1992, p. 87).

### 3.2 Text and Image

When elaborating on social context, interaction and text as three dimensions of discourse, Fairclough (1989) argues that text is part of discourse as social interaction and that “the text is a product of the process of text production” (1989, p. 24). This process might be perceived from the point of view of *production* and *interpretation*, in which the former sees the text as a product and the latter considers text as a resource for interpretation. According to Fairclough, text analysis is in fact just “a part of discourse analysis which includes analysis of productive and interpretative processes” (1989, p. 24).

In order to make sense of a text it is necessary to figure out how the parts of the text link to each other and determine how the text is connected to the world. Fairclough (1989) calls this linking process *coherence*. The author also argues that this sense of coherence is a type of counteraction which occurs when elements in the text are merged with what is in the interpreter's mind. What is 'in' the interpreter, the author calls "members' resources" (MR), which are "the common-sense assumptions and expectations of the interpreter" (1989, p. 78).

Therefore, the process of interpretation involves both the reader and the producer of the text as the latter weaves the text based on his/her own interpretation of the world. As a consequence, Fairclough argues that "text interpretation is the interpretation of an interpretation" since "both the production and the interpretation of texts are creative, constructive interpretative processes" (1989, p. 80). Hence, based on the concepts above, it may be possible to argue that the representation of Brazil found in *Superman – Peace on Earth* is not exclusively what we as readers (or interpreters) deduce from the text based on our MR's, since this representation is, to a certain extent, influenced by the writers and how they interpret the world and reproduce it in the comic book.

As remarked earlier, when one is investigating text features in a comic book it is necessary to have in mind that its narrative process is conveyed by verbal and pictorial means, each one of them having a complementary function. They co-operate in conveying the meanings, but they are still apart from each other. This complementary relation that exists between verbal and pictorial means is, according to Barthes (1977), denominated 'relay'.

The images in a comic book might also be referred to as icons, in so far as these images are a representation of reality (McCloud, 1993). It is this co-existence of words and icons in a dialectical relationship, complementing each other in conveying the message to the reader which turns this genre into a peculiar sort of cultural manifestation.



The function each of the components of vocabulary – words and icons – exerts is rather clear in some comics, albeit not as clear in others. The setting and the action are usually better depicted through images, while words may provide the reader with meanings for the actions (Serbena, 1999), even though these functions attributed to words and images might not be really clear-cut, taking into consideration that one may find comics in which the icons carry the whole meaning of the story. This sort of ‘silent’ narrative may be found not only in comic strips, but also in super-hero comic books like Batman or Daredevil, for instance, where it is rather common to find long action sequences without captions. Sequences of this kind are usually used to express how silently characters can move around, for instance, the meaning being expressed through images, making words unnecessary in this specific case.

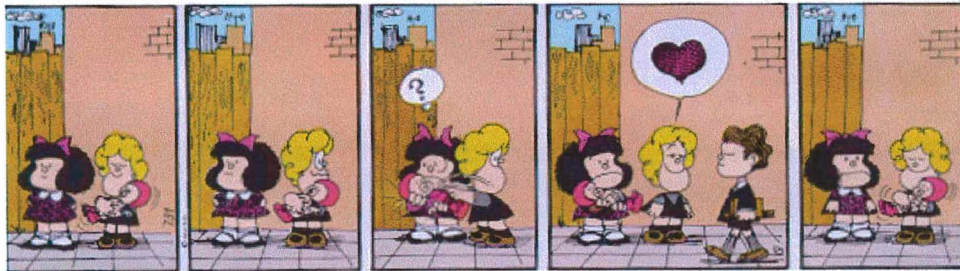


Figure 3.1: In this *Mafalda* strip by Quino images convey meanings by themselves, and each panel exerts the function of *timing* the narrative.



Figure 3.2: The role of images in this *Cebolinha* strip by Mauricio de Souza is ancillary, as clauses carry out the message. Images play an illustrative role in this strip.



Figure 3.3: In this *Cebolinha* strip by Mauricio de Souza the relationship between clauses and image is one of equality, considering that it is the image that completes the meaning of the joke, which was introduced by the first statement, in the first panel.

McCloud (1993) supports the idea that an icon is a super-ordinate category which symbols are part of, and that images “represent concepts, ideas and philosophies”. The author conceptualizes icons as “any image used to represent a person, place, thing or idea” (McCloud, 1993, p. 27), suggesting that there are icons that are present in our practical lives, such as 1, 2, 3... A, B, C... ? ! : &  $\Omega$   $\neq$   $\varnothing$ . Numbers, letters and other alphabetic symbols might be regarded as icons because they are an arbitrary representation of abstract concepts. Also, there are icons that we refer to as pictures.

The “iconic content” of pictures may differ according to the degree of likeness and as a consequence, some pictures may be more “iconic” than others, that is, the pictures may have a greater resemblance to the represented participants (McCloud, 1993).

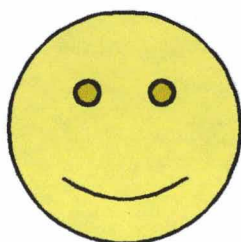


Figure 3.4



Figure 3.5: Batgirl picture copied from the internet.

It is possible to visualize how iconic a picture can be in the two examples above. Figure 3.4 represents a person, but in a broad sense, insofar as it is not possible to identify any particular trait in it, such as gender or any other physical characteristic. The sketch is abstract enough to allow the viewer only to identify the figure as a human being. On the other hand, Figure 3.5 is less iconic in the sense that it narrows down the possibilities of interpretation, that is, it is less abstract than Figure 3.4. By simply looking at the figure one may identify that it represents a woman, not a man, that this woman has long hair, and also that she is not a stewardess or a nurse, but a super-heroine. The attributes the figure possesses allow the viewer to identify it as a social role in a fictional universe inhabited by humans with abilities that go far beyond our restraints.

The examples given above draw us to the conclusion that the more abstract a picture is the broader the range of meanings one can attribute to it, fostering what McCloud (1993) names as “amplification through simplification”. Conversely, the complexity of details of an image will reduce the meanings that one might give to it, as in the example below, where the richness in details somehow gives Superman a status of human being, as it looks as if it were a photograph.

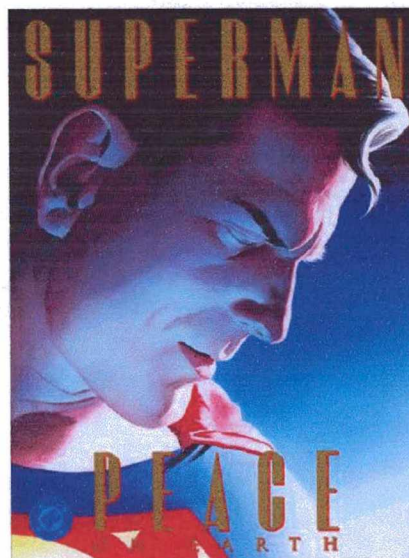


Figure 3.6: image taken from the cover of *Superman – Peace on Earth*

In *Superman – Peace on Earth* the images are meticulously drawn. The art of Alex Ross has an impressive style which would not fit in regular monthly issues and might be referred to as fleshy, photo-realistic art (McCloud, 1993).

Comic books such as *Superman – Peace on Earth*<sup>1</sup> are “drawn more realistically in order to objectify them [the represented participants], emphasizing their otherness from the reader”, contributing to create an idea of “weight, texture and physical complexity” (McCloud, 1993, p. 44). Therefore, considering that “the more cartoony a face is, the more people it could be said to describe” (McCloud, 1993, p. 31), one might argue that Ross seems to have adopted this photo-realistic style in order to emphasize the otherness of the characters and prevent the reader from identifying him/herself with them, conducting the reader to see it as a portrayal of the real world. The photo-realism of this comic book depicts a world immersed in social problems such as hunger and people suffering from total abandonment by politicians and authorities, and the complex pictorial representation of such situation looks as an attempt to persuade the reader to stand for those people in need that in fact are starving around the globe.

### 3.3 Reading images

The perspective chosen by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) for investigating features of images is based on the same point of view adopted by Halliday in his *Functional Grammar* (1994): as in clauses, investigation should start from the whole and just then go to the pieces which compound the images subject to inquiry.

In examining images, one should be attentive to the sort of participants involved in the process of communication. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) claim that there are two types of participants entailed in the image: represented and interactive participants. The first refers to

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<sup>1</sup> As pointed out earlier, DC Comics have released other titles with the photo-realistic art of Alex Ross, such as *Kingdom Come* (1997), *Batman – War on Crime* (1999) and *Shazam! – Power of Hope* (2000).

locations, things and people portrayed in images while the second encompasses the people involved in the process of communication, that is, the producers and readers, that is, “real people who produce and make sense of images in the context of social institutions which, to different degrees and in different ways, regulate what may be ‘said’ with images, and how it should be said, and how images should be interpreted” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.119).

In respect to comic books, as in other means of mass communication media, there is not direct communication between producer and reader, insofar as the context of production is different from the context of reception. As a consequence to this cleft, the producer has to create a mental profile of the readers/consumers and how they would interpret, or simply, read the linguistic code which, in a comic book, is composed of words and images, being the latter an essential part of the code, that is, without images there is no comic book, but anecdotes or any other genre predominantly verbal. In order to reach the reader, or viewer, the producer has to make a “choice of a specific linguistic code, a certain literary style” (Eco, 1979, as quoted in Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.120) which would fit the reader’s MR’S. Another consequence of this disjunction is that reality and social relations are represented as dependent on a specific point-of-view. Considering *Superman: Peace on Earth*, for instance, what a reader finds on its pages is a hasty representation of Brazilian children on streets of Rio, of people starving in East Europe. Such representation conveys a stereotyped interpretation of what homeless Brazilian children or poor people in East Europe look like or what they live on.

Besides taking into account the type of participants, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) expose a number of aspects that should be considered when analyzing images, some of which I will make use of in order to exploit images taken from *Superman – Peace on Earth*, to be enlisted below.

Analogous to the Relational and Existential Processes in Halliday's Functional Grammar (1994), the Conceptual representations present "participants in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, or structure, or meaning" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.79), being divided into three types of processes: Classificational, Analytical and Symbolic (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996).

Classificational processes "relate participants to each other in terms of a 'kind of relation, a taxonomy" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.81) and they lay a function of *Superordinate* and *Subordinate*. Participants of different types may be joined together and convey an idea of similarity between them, such as in advertisements. *Free* cigarettes advertisements on TV, for instance, used to display young people from different professional areas holding one thing in common: all of them would consume *Free*. The equivalence between the participants (*Subordinates*) is set by placing them as belonging to the same *Superordinate* category, of those who smoke the same kind of cigarettes. However, I will not attain myself to Classificational processes in my analysis, but will focus on Analytical and Symbolic processes, considering that these two processes fulfill the purposes of this study.

The part-whole relationship in an image is regarded as an Analytical Process. It is analogous to the Possessive Attributive Processes, another sub-category of the Relational Processes and it also involves two kinds of participants: the Carrier, which represents the whole part of an image, and the Possessive Attributes, which refer to its parts. In reading a map of Brazil, according to the Analytical Process, we would classify the whole country as the Carrier, while the states which compound the country would be the Possessive Attributes. Similarly, what allows one to identify Figure 3.5 above as representing a super-heroine is an Analytical reading of the image. The Possessive Attributes found in the image, such as the mask, the cape and the symbolic representation of a bat contribute, altogether, to create the

meaning we attribute to the whole. Such theory is applied by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) to isolated pictures taken from magazines, such as fashion shots.

However, when applying such concept to comic books it is necessary to take into consideration that they are sequential art. It means that the parts that constitute a whole idea might be found in more than one panel. A specific panel might hold the function of Carrier, providing the reader with the whole, but the following panels might own Possessive Attributes that will extend the meanings and values attributed to that Carrier. Hence, in a comic book a panel might work as a Carrier, setting the scene, and the Possessive Attributes found in the following panels categorize, narrow down and at the same time explain the meanings of the first panel, the Carrier.



Figure 3.7



Figure 3.8

Figures 3.7 and 3.8 exemplify how the relationship between panels establish the Carrier and the Possessive Attributes. Figure 3.7 offers the reader a very close shot (this term will be further explained below) of a major character in Wonder Woman story line, Professor Julia Kapatelis. The wound in her face, her stared look, the open mouth in an expression of surprise, and the sweat running down her forehead reveal, in the collectivity, that there is

something wrong going on with her. The signs I have just listed occupy the function of Attribute but these Attributes are not the only elements which compound the entire scene. One should bear in mind that it is not possible to have a character without any Attributes when introduced on the first page, as they would, as a primary function, help identify him or her. On the first page, those elements are, merely, the right amount of information the reader is allowed to have. When turning the page, the reader has the access to further details, and therefore, to other elements that also compound the first panel. In this case, Figure 4.8 brings into light the location where Professor Kapatelis is, besides the reason why she is in panic at that moment. Figure 3.8 would, therefore, work as an Attribute to figure 3.7, which would function as a Carrier.

The relevance in examining the Possessive Attributes lies in the fact that they represent a choice, they involve a selection of parts which will provide the meaning achieved in the whole. Such choice depends on the interpretive perspective of the producers, and therefore it is not impartial, but ideologically loaded.

Symbolic Processes “are about what a participant *means* or *is*” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.108) and they might be composed of two participants: the Carrier and the Symbolic Attribute, and in this case the process will be called Symbolic Attribute. Participants are considered as Symbolic Attributes when they hold one of the subsequent properties:

- (1) They are made salient in the representation in one way or another, for instance by being placed in the foreground, through exaggerated size, through being especially well lit, through being represented in especially fine detail or sharp focus, or through their conspicuous colour or tone.
  - (2) They are pointed at by means of gesture which cannot be interpreted as an action other than the action of ‘pointing out the symbolic attribute to the viewer’ (...).
  - (3) They look out of place in the whole.
  - (4) They are conventionally associated with symbolic values”.
- (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.108).



When composed of only one participant, the Carrier, the Symbolic processes are referred to as Symbolic Suggestive. As stated earlier, the Symbolic Processes have only one carrier and they will not be confused as Analytical “because in this kind of [symbolic] image detail tends to be de-emphasized in favour of what could be called ‘mood’ or ‘atmosphere’” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.110).

### 3.4 Reading the images in *Superman – Peace on Earth*

An inquiry into the role of images is quite compulsory when one is investigating the relations of power embedded in the narrative of a comic book. When dealing with images, there are several possibilities, such as exploring Analytical, Classificational processes. However, it is necessary to narrow down those possibilities and select the number of tools which would allow one to accomplish his or her goals. Choosing a pathway over another does not necessarily mean that the trajectory chosen is the best one, but simply that one cannot make use, at once, of all the tools at his or her disposal.

Hence, I have decided to apply the Conceptual Relations (precisely, Analytical and Symbolic Processes) in *Superman: Peace on Earth*, as well as explore the image act and gaze, the size of frames and angles as concisely reviewed in the following section, employing them as tools in my investigation.

The choice of the figures was in accordance with the relevance they have for the development of the plot and how they act in portraying both the in-group and the out-group. The same criteria used for examining clauses was applied to images. I picked an uneven number of pictures that would refer to the USA, labeled as in-group, and also a set of pictures that would depict people and places in South America, East Europe and Africa, which are indexed as out-group. For the sake of clarity, figures concerning the in-group will be accompanied of the suffix *in* (e.g. Figure 3.9*in*), whereas figures relative to the out-group will

be followed by the suffix *out* (e.g. Figure 3.21*out*). I have disposed figures in a different order than in the comic book. In the original, they follow the sequence of the narrative, and sometimes the same sequence of pictures is interrupted by a second sequence, establishing two sets of actions happening at the same time. I have rearranged images so that figures pertaining to the same sequence would be put together.

In accordance with the concept of Analytical Representations discussed above, Figure 3.9*in* might be classified as a Carrier. In this figure, the viewer is offered an image of Superman flying towards the ground and carrying a pine tree on his shoulder. The background is composed of a blue sky blemished with scattered flakes of snow. Hence, this figure sets the scenario for the starting point of the story: some time around Christmas in Metropolis, the city where Superman lives, usually associated with New York City<sup>2</sup>.

Figure 3.10*in* adds new information to Figure 3.9*in* and for that reason it is possible to argue that it has Possessive Attributes. Composed of four frames, Figure 3.10*in* offers an overview of what is below Superman in Figure 3.9*in*. In the first frame, the biggest one on the left, a low angle is used that, including Superman, gives a breathtaking glimpse of the crowd on the ground. The second picture, which is offered in an eye-level angle, the viewer can perceive additional details regarding the crowd. People are excitedly giving an ovation to Superman as he lands with the pine tree. Subsequently, the hero, as a flash of light, decorates the pine tree and leaves the place, just waving goodbye to the delighted crowd. The atmosphere is characterized not only by the people cheering at Superman, but also by the use of a variety of colors. Figures 3.9*in* and 3.10*in* complement each other as they offer the viewer two different angles of the same scene, and, concurrently, Figure 3.10*in* narrows down the possibilities of interpretation of Figure 3.9*in*.

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<sup>2</sup> Yet, such inference of Superman's home as being Metropolis and the association with News York City is dependent on the degree of acquaintance the viewer/reader has with super-hero comic books and its compounding elements.

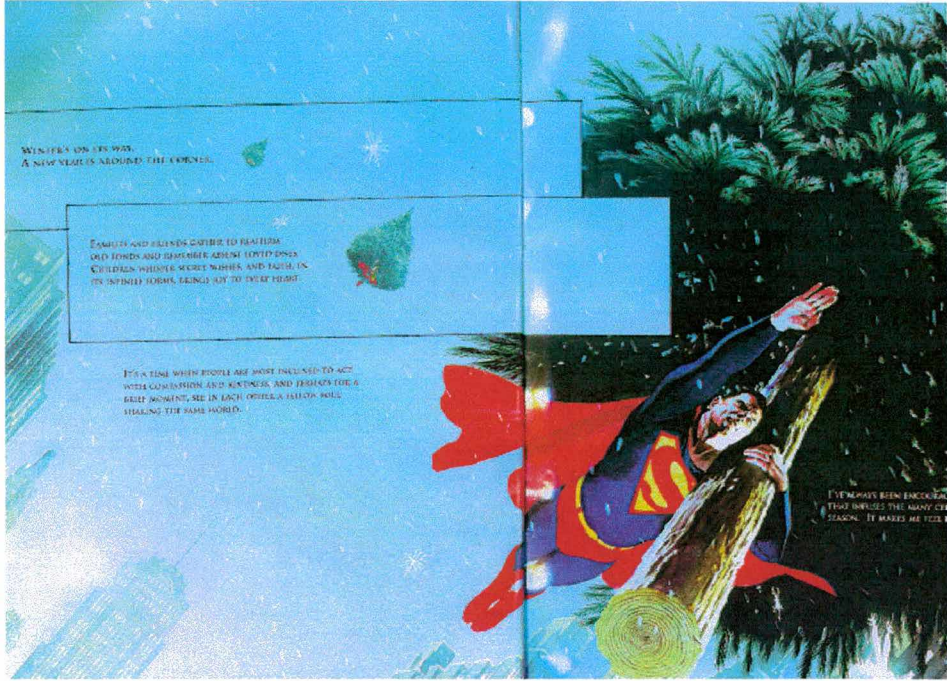


Figure 3.9in

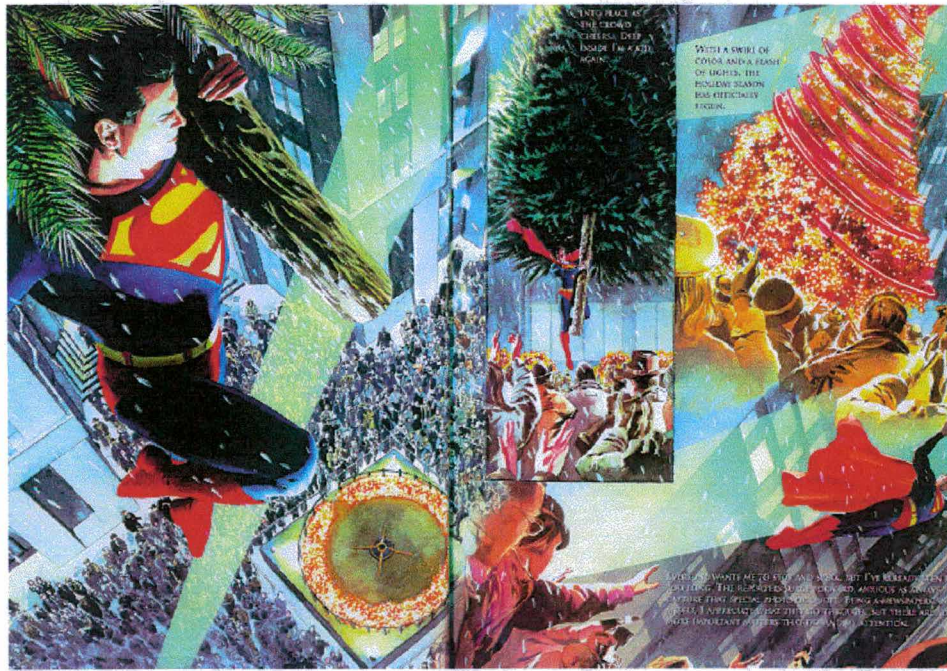


Figure 3.10in

Figure 3.11*in* offers another eye-level picture of people walking through a decorated street. This time, Superman mingles with the crowd disguised as his alter-ego Clark Kent. People are talking and smiling, in a vivid Christmas ambience. In Figure 3.12*in* the viewer is offered a peek through a window of the Daily Planet, the newspaper where Clark Kent works, to witness a holiday party where people amusedly talk and drink.



Figure 3.11*in*

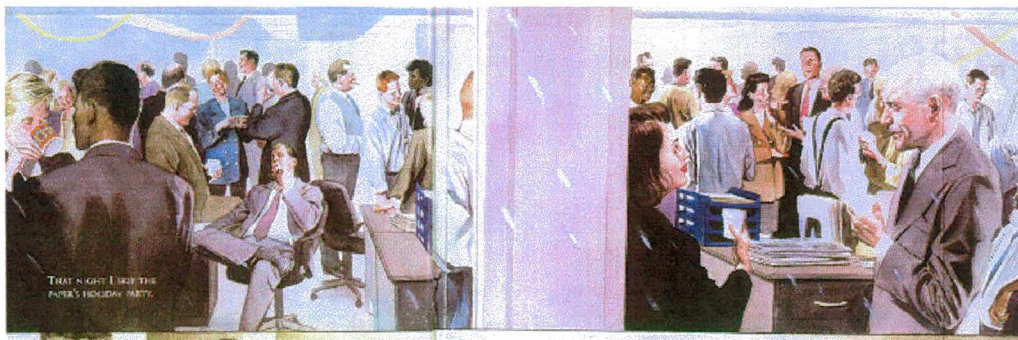


Figure 3.12*in*

Figures 3.13*in*, 3.14*in* and 3.15*in* complement each other in the narration of a digressing story that occurs along with the Christmas arrangements and celebrations. Figure 3.13*in* is composed of five frames. Right after fitting the Christmas tree Superman leaves and, as he flies away, he hears “a scream of pain” among the crowd. On that account, the man of steel dives down into the crowd to find a girl who is about to faint. He quickly takes her up in his arms and realizes that she has just fainted due to starvation. Figure 3.14*in*, composed of

four frames, displays Superman arriving at a building with the young girl in his arms. The second frame, working as a Possessive Attribute to the first one, the Carrier, allows us to identify the place as a shelter. The narrator lets the viewer know, in the linguistic text, that Dr. Rebecca Mason is in charge of the place and that she has dedicated most of her life to taking care of poor people who get to that shelter in search for help. The second frame displays people stunningly surprised with the majestic presence of Superman. The third frame exhibits Superman putting the girl in the arms of a member of Dr. Mason's staff. Next, we come across a very close shot of Superman putting his glasses and hence assuming the identity of Clark Kent, suggesting that this is not a work for Superman anymore, as the case has been already solved and might be handled by ordinary people. Moreover, it is a moment when the viewer is allowed to witness the changing of Superman into Clark Kent. It draws the viewer closer to the character as they share a secret, revealing not only a certain degree of intimacy, but also of complicity. This complicity is reinforced in the written part of the text, when the first person narrator is adopted. This narrative resource pulls the reader closer, and right into the narrator's mind. The reader becomes a secret observer who can access details that only the main character, Superman, knows.

Figure 3.15*in* offers an image of Superman as Clark Kent, talking to Dr. Mason at the shelter. The picture of Kent and Dr. Mason occupies less than half of the image, on the left side. The biggest portion of the image is filled with a sight of a group of people orderly sitting in a dining room while having a meal.

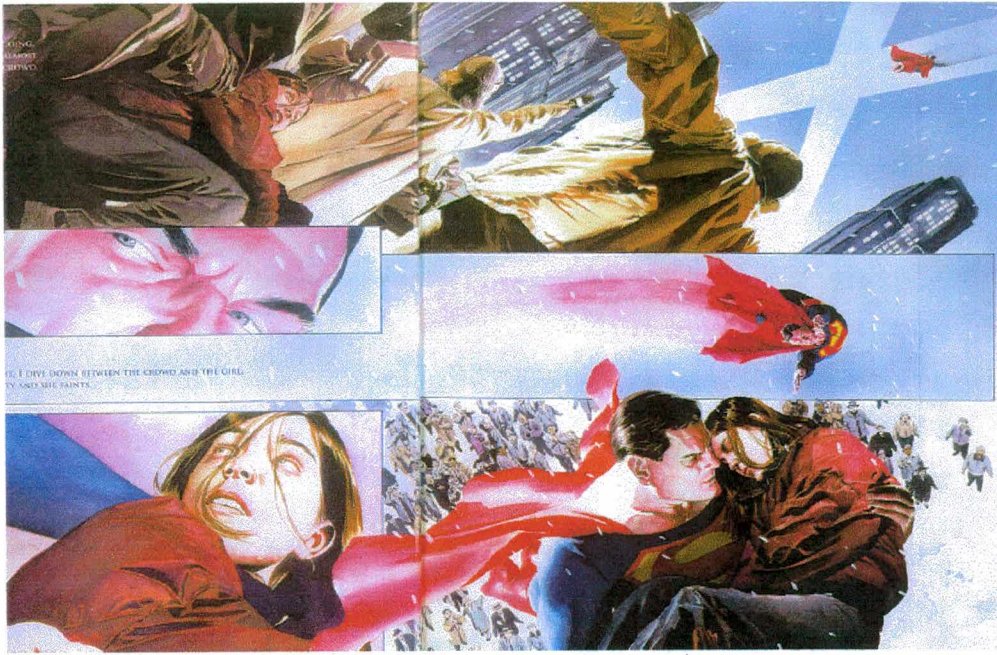


Figure 3.13in

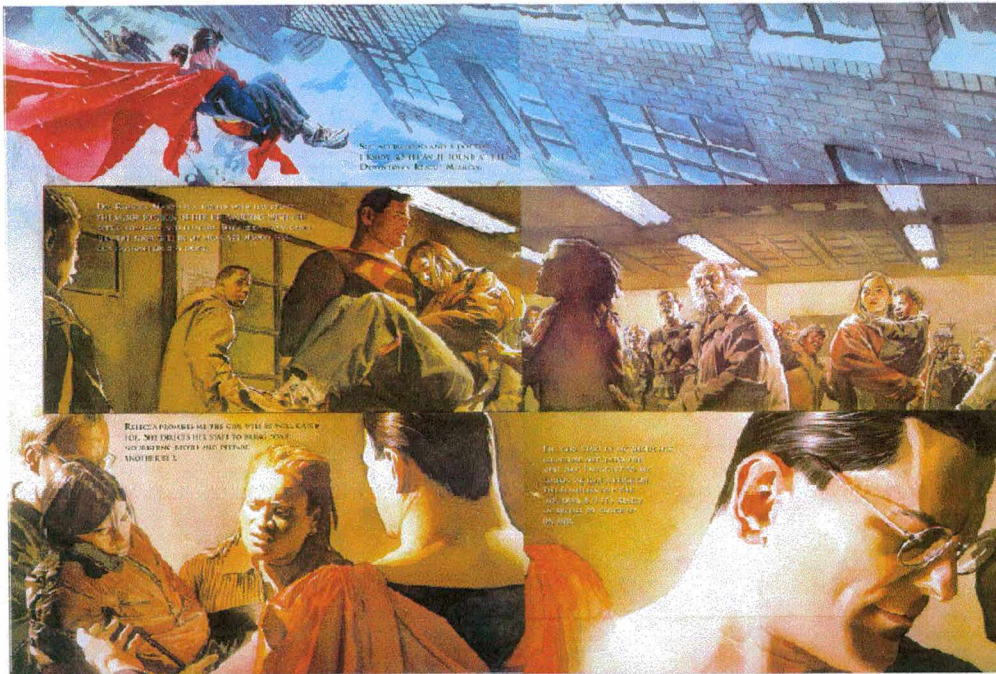


Figure 3.14in

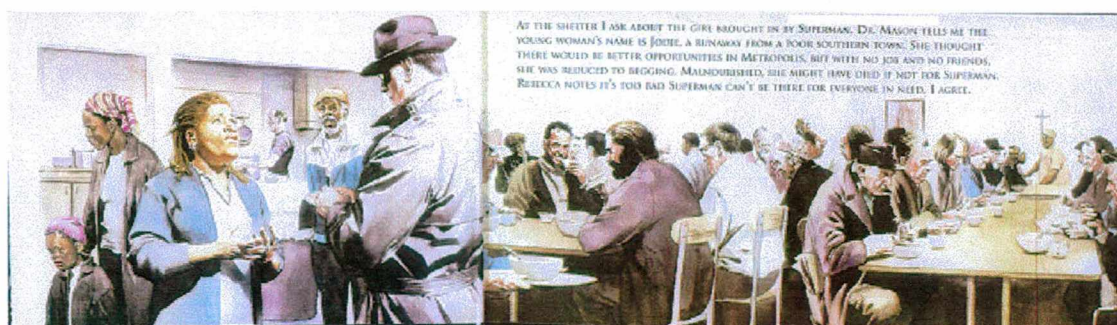


Figure 3.15in



Figure 3.16in

This set of eight figures described above exerts the function of characterizing the in-group in the narrative. All the figures above hold some points in common. They are all offers, which means that they try not to establish a direct relationship with the viewer, but simply expose the information on display to his/her eyes, and as a consequence to his/her judgment.

The figures characterize Metropolis during Christmas as a place where people are wealthy enough to spend time shopping during the days that precede Christmas, as it can be inferred from Figure 3.11*in*, where people are walking by the street and shop windows are displayed, indicating it is also a place for shopping. These people get together for celebrating the fitting of a Christmas tree on a cold day and they can afford wearing a proper outfit for the occasion and also for the weather conditions.

These people have social problems, such as the girl starving in the middle of the crowd, but they have a super man who watches over them and who is able to hear a cry for help even in the distance, even if it is lost among a cheering crowd. They have people like Dr. Mason, who can dedicate herself to taking care of a shelter, which implies that there is a social structure that permits maintaining a shelter . All these points suggest that those people live a stable life and that the existent social problems receive the due attention and are appropriately solved.

Besides being offers, most of the angles chosen to depict the in-group are at eye-level or high-angle. Amongst all the figures enlisted above a low angle is used only three times: in Figure 3.9*in*, in the fourth frame of Figure 3.10*in*, and in the first frame of Figure 3.13*in*. The use of a low angle seems to be a form of establishing and reassuring the imposing character Superman is. If one takes into consideration that Superman, with his values and with the predominant red and blue of his uniform, epitomizes the United States of America, it is feasible to argue that, indeed, what is being established and reassured is the omnipotence and omnipresence of the USA. Superman typifies the USA as if he were an institution that cares for those who depend on it, in this case, citizens who depend on the assistance of their country.

Figure 3.16*in*, the last one chosen for the investigation regarding the in-group, validates the argument that Superman is a symbolic representation of the USA. This figure is



a long shot of a hall in the North American Congress. The members of the Congress are sitting in a semi-circle, whereas a smaller group occupies a rectangular table right in the front of the room. Behind these men, there is a big picture of George Washington. If it were not for the left hand Washington has on his hip, the picture would correlate with the image of Superman impressively standing between the semi-circle and the table. It is feasible to relate Superman to Washington insofar as they are the only ones standing. The implications of this correlation go beyond the way they stand. It can be inferred that Superman and George Washington are men of the same kind, leaders that conduct men to freedom and fight for justice. Moreover, the faces around the room evince a blending of admiration and respect for that standing still figure. Superman is in the Congress to ask for permission to harvest the spare crops around the USA and distribute the food around the world, but with the authorization of the Congress. Therefore, the hero is acting on behalf of the Congress, and hence on behalf of the USA as those men were elected to represent the whole country.

Regarding the size of frames, Superman is depicted in a long shot in most of the frames, except in the second, third and fourth frames of Figure 3.14*in*. In these figures, the second frame offers a medium shot of Superman, whereas the third offers a close shot and the fourth frame a very close shot, as I have stated above. These long shots display Superman at a public distance, when the viewer is able to see “the torso of at least four or five people” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p.131). This long distance functions as “an invisible barrier between the viewer and the object. The object is there for our contemplation only, out of reach, as if only on display in a shop window or museum exhibit” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, p.134).

In respect to the out-group, Figure 3.17*out* is an offer displaying Superman arriving in Brazil. The image functions as a Carrier, as it sets the scenario. Figure 3.18*out* works as a

Possessive Attribute, as it will characterize the Carrier. Details about Figures 3.17out and 3.18out will be dealt with in the following section of this chapter.



Figure 3.17out

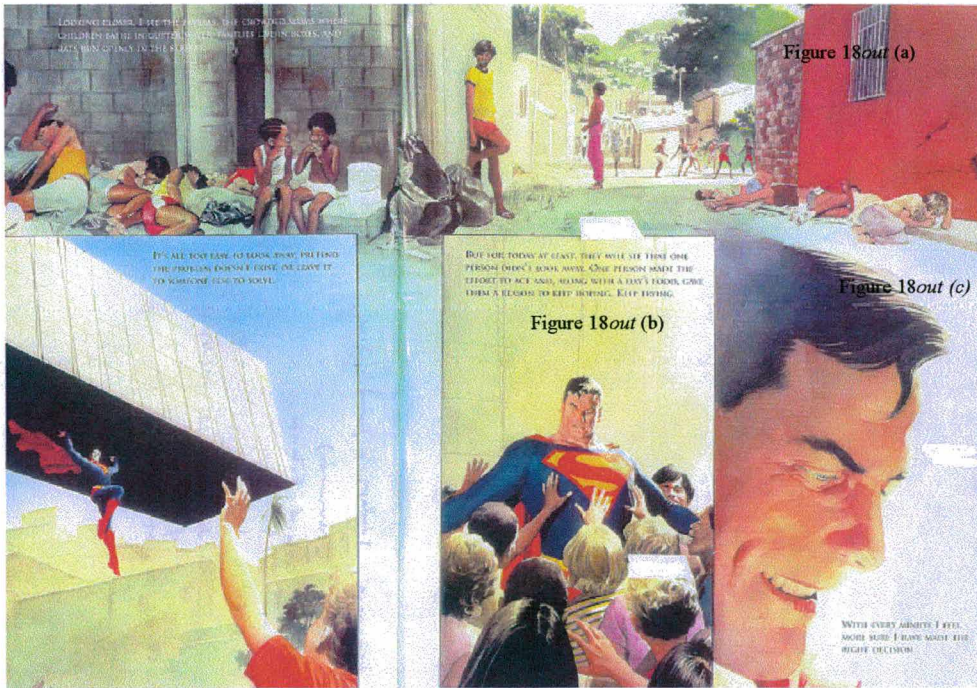


Figure 3.18out

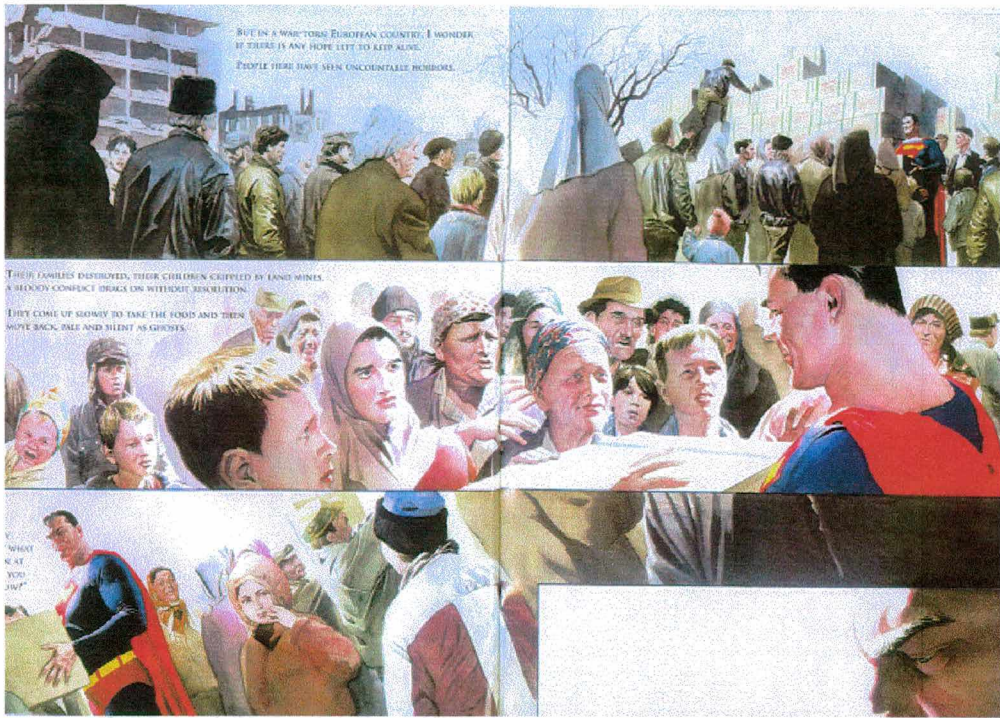


Figure 3.19out

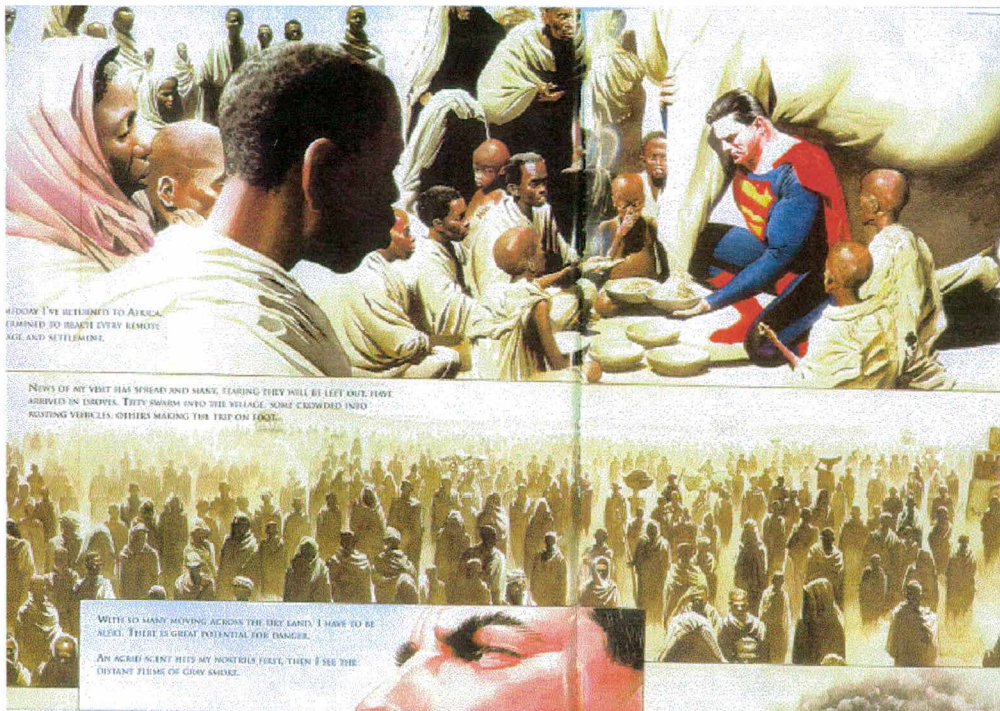


Figure 3.20out

Figure 3.19*out*, composed of four frames, depicts people “in a war-torn European country” (Ross & Dini, 1999, p.33), which is likely to be a reference to countries in East Europe. The first frame is at eye-level, and shows the crowd gathering around Superman and receiving food. The angle puts the hero in a sort of equality with the people surrounding him. In the second frame, however, the high angle offers the viewer a partial sight of Superman’s point of view. What he can see is people with an expression of sadness in the eyes. The result of this angle is the strengthening of the differences between the crowd and Superman. The man of steel looks powerful and authoritative, while on the contrary the crowd looks submissive, staring sadly at him. The third frame brings Superman in a long shot that intensifies his attitude, and concurrently opposes him to a child who looks in despair. Opposing Superman to a child validates the act of distributing food around the world and at the same time enhances the good intentions the hero is driven by.

Africa is the place represented in Figure 3.20*out*. In this figure only the first and the second frames are relevant for the present analysis. The first frame shows a long shot of Superman distributing food to people, several mal-nourished children gathering around him. The second frame offers a long shot that depicts life condition of the represented participants. The frame is just a blurred image of a crowd merged with dust, amplifying the idea of abandonment and impoverishment they live in.

In most of the figures displaying the represented participants, the color which stands out is the red and blue of Superman’s outfit. The colors used for the represented participants are usually of an ocher tone. As a consequence, the presence of Superman is outstandingly noticed in comparison to the other represented participants.

Similar to what was identified in the clauses, images also reveal a pattern in constructing and establishing the identity of the represented participants. The in-group is construed as wealthy and prosperous people inserted in a well-off social milieu and which is

able to take care of those less fortunate. Antithetically, the out-group is enclosed in an environment permeated with poverty and lack of hope or perspectives of improvement.

In order to push the discussion above forward, I will analyze in further detail a set of images in which Brazil comes into view as represented participant and contrast such representation with that of the in-group.

### 3.5 Seeing Brazil through Superman's eyes.

Investigating interpersonal meanings in visual communication requires the analyzes of formal features of pictures which would add to one's comprehension. The image act and gaze of a picture would reveal the ways in which the represented participants relate to and at the same time address the viewer, in a direct or indirect manner. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, a represented participant which looks directly at the viewer seems to 'demand' that he or she get engaged in a sort of imagined connection. On the other hand, when represented participants do not look at the viewer directly it is characterized as an 'offer', submitted "to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally" (1996, p. 124). The authors argue that the purpose for choosing between an 'offer' or 'demand' goes beyond simply suggesting different relations, being also motivated by the interest of making viewers become involved with some and stand apart from other aspects represented through images.

The size of frame is another important aspect in the interactive meanings of pictures, ranging between close-up, medium shot, long shot and its variations. Choosing a particular distance indicates the sort of relation between represented participants and viewers. A close shot would involve the head and shoulders of the represented participant, whereas the medium shot would include up to the waist, approximately. In a long shot a human figure would take at least "half the height of the frame" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.130).

The implications of making use of a determined distance to suggest the type of relation between represented participants and viewers is connected with the notions of social distance. The closer we are able to get to a person, the closer is the relationship we maintain with him or her and, inversely, the bigger the distance we are allowed to get to a person, the smaller is the connection. The differentiation in distance reveals the social relations people are engaged in, the degree of intimacy they have.

Another feature which can be explored in order to undress the relations being established between represented and interactive participants is the angle chosen to depict the former. Angles are likely to reveal relations of power between participants. According to Kress and van Leeuwen a high angle “makes the subject look small and insignificant” (1996, p.146), while on the contrary a low angle might provide the represented participant with great significance. Martin postulates that “low angles generally give an impression of superiority, exaltation and triumph... high angles tend to diminish the individual, to flatten him morally by reducing him to ground level, to render him as caught in an insurmountable determinism” (1968, as quoted in Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.146). An eye-level picture lays open a relation of equality, that seems to leave aside conceivable relations of power.

An ‘offer’ is what the reader is first provided with in Figure 3.17*out*, when Superman arrives in Brazil. The image is a long shot of Superman flying over Rio de Janeiro. The perspective we have of the scene whereby Superman is preparing himself to land in Rio de Janeiro, carrying on his powerful hands a container of food, is not a regular one but the perspective of one of the most famous postcards in the world. Below Superman’s feet are the Christ, Guanabara bay, and the Sugar Loaf, all of them displayed in the same shot.

This point of view is particularly interesting. Superman is in the foreground in the picture, followed by the Christ, right after him and clearly in the background. The hero is close to the Christ's right hand and above him, which leads to the interpretation that Superman

is the one standing at the right hand of our “Heavenly Father”, sent from the skies to help the ones in need, similar to what Jesus, the Christ, did.

The picture as a whole has a light green tonality except for the image of Superman, whose red and blue uniform is conspicuous. The shot seems to confer to Superman the position of a savior who comes from above the sky to help hopeless people who live in pain and who need someone with valor to help them. Thus, we are tempted to infer that if people in Rio need someone with valor to help them it concomitantly means that those people have no one with valor among them who may stand for their needs, and that external assistance is required to help them deal with their predicaments. The high-angle picture of Superman over Rio de Janeiro also turns the reader into an observer, in an elevated position, as if he/she were looking through a window, in a metaphorical sense. This reader/viewer has access to the facts, and as an observer is invited to take a stand before the problematic situation represented.

Figure 3.18out (a) shows the final destination of Superman: a slum somewhere in Rio de Janeiro. The angle of the image is at eye level and there are children all around the place, some of them sleeping over garbage plastic bags in the first plan, while others play soccer in the background, a quite common representation of Brazil abroad: everybody plays soccer, despite their misery. Although Superman is arriving in the place at daylight, there are several children sleeping on the floor, others barefoot and shirtless. There are no adults around the place, and most of the children are black, which is another misconception about Brazil.

In Figure 4.18out (b), a medium close shot at eye level, Superman has already landed in the slum and distributed the food. This figure is also an ‘offer’, as Superman does not look to the viewer, but stands among the children with arms opened, looking down at them, in a gesture which attempts to reveal how valorous he is. The picture also reminds us of another comparison to Jesus. In the New Testament, the apostle Matthew narrates a moment when Jesus is found among children. The other apostles try to take them away from Jesus, who

replies: "Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he laid his hands on their heads before he left that place." (Matthew 19: 14-15).

In the statement above Jesus makes it clear to the apostles that those children have privileges in relation to him. In the same way, Superman seems to give special attention to the little ones. The feeling of accomplishment that invades Superman before he leaves the place is clearly seen in Figure 3.18out (c), a very close shot, where we find the hero again looking down at the children with a smirk in his face and compassionate eyes.

Throughout the pictures mentioned above what one may find is a distorted and limited representation of reality, inasmuch as such representation reveals how Brazil is perceived by North Americans. Perhaps the producers of *Superman – Peace on Earth* are not aware of the stereotyped representation found in the comic, and probably no one can be assertive about their purposes. Nevertheless, it can be inferred that such perspective is based on common sense, simply taking for granted that this is how reality is in Rio. At the same time, the aforementioned representation functions as a means to look at the social problems depicted as common sense, which is in accordance with the view that Kress & van Leeuwen have of the role of mass media texts:

mass media texts are produced in the context of real social institutions, in order to play a very real role in social life – in order to do certain things to or for the readers, and in order to communicate attitudes towards aspects of social life and towards people who participate in them, whether authors and readers are consciously aware of this or not. (1996, p. 120)

Regarding common sense, Fairclough claims that it is "substantially ideological" (1989, p. 84) and that it is a "conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity and in all manifestations of individual and collective life" (Gramsci, 1971 in Fairclough, 1989, p. 84). Brazil as a whole is represented by Rio de Janeiro, and Rio de Janeiro is apparently reduced to homeless children in the street. Therefore, the visual



elements examined depict Brazil and its people as weak, so that the USA and its people can be, on the other hand, seen as strong.

The USA is portrayed in a position of superiority in relation to Brazil, which, on the other hand, is portrayed as a poor country, left alone with its own social problems by Brazilians themselves. The pictures analyzed above seem to function as a mechanism through which a position of superiority and supremacy is established with the reader/viewer, pointing Brazilians as the ones who face such social limitations and Americans as the ones who may help them to cope with the social chaos they live in.

### 3.6 What does the outfit of Superman stand for?

The launching of Detective Comics #1 started out a whole new genre of comic books, as I have stated before. This new genre, the super-hero comic book, owned an important element of differentiation regarding other comic books: the outfit used by the main characters. Since then, every super-hero should wear a costume, allowing the reader to identify the hero as part of a selected community – that of common people with extra abilities – and also revealing part of the hero's personality, establishing his or her individuality. For female heroes, it is rather common to have a major part of the body exposed, but the use of color is indistinct for both sexes (Reynolds, 1992).

Bringing the concept of the Symbolic Processes (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996) into play it is possible to argue that Superman is the Carrier whereas his uniform exerts the function of Symbolic Attribute insofar as it might be linked with symbolic values ascribed to the American flag.

According to Reynolds, the role of costumes goes far beyond that of hiding the identity of the hero. It works as “a sign for the inward process of character development” (1992, p.29). Changing the costume of a character would also mean changing his/her

personality and character development. That would be acceptable if applied to a second rank character, but not to those who are in the first rank, such as Superman, insofar as his costume encapsulates a whole “iconographic configuration” constructed along his story line.

As a major symbol of pop culture, Superman has been wearing the main colors of the American flag for over sixty years, functioning as an archetypal figure and an emblem of the American patriotism.

According to Eagan, Superman is said to be the guardian of truth, justice and the American way. The author defines the North-American way as “a set of ideas or basic principles having to do with the role of government and the accepted rules of the political game. (...) It is government by consent of the governed. It is human rights protected by government” (1987, p.89). Eagan points out that the concept of truth, justice and the North-American way is likely to sound differently for North-American readers who lived during the McCarthy period, the post-Vietnam America or even during the current war against terrorism promoted by the USA and allied countries against Afghanistan.

Interestingly, a tale of Superman in the 40s began with the following lines: “when the mighty Man of Tomorrow discovers threats endangering the well-being of our great nation he launches a battle against the saboteurs that will be long remembered” (Eagan, 1987, p. 90). One might be amazed by the contemporaneity of such statement, considering that the discourse of American politicians, mainly that of the President George W. Bush encompasses similar ideas, when reasoning the belligerent counter-attack to the explosion of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, for instance. Such parallelism between Superman and the attitude of President Bush regarding the New York City strike might be better visualized if one compares the quotation above with the following excerpt from Bush’s speech right after the strike:

In our world, there is no isolation from evil. Our enemies are murderers with global reach. They seek weapons to kill on a global scale. Every nation now must oppose this enemy, or be, in turn, its target. Those who hate all civilization and culture and progress, those who embrace death to cause the death of the innocent, cannot be ignored, cannot be appeased. They must be fought. This is my firm resolve, and the firm resolve of my nation. This is the urgent task of our time. The most visible part of our response is taking place in Afghanistan. The Taliban regime has allied itself with murderers. I gave Taliban leaders a choice: turn over the terrorists, or face your ruin. They chose unwisely. (Bush, 2001)

Eagan argues that in the American political environment it is traditionally believed that “the purpose of government is to maintain law and order, to police, to regulate behavior” (1987, p.91), a notion which also pervades the Superman series. Moreover, the author supports the argument that the hero will rarely be caught “bringing about the real and lasting improvement of the human condition; rather, they will find an obsession with preserving the status quo” (1987, p.91). Instead of guiding his efforts to transform the causes of crime and poverty, Superman concentrates his efforts on arresting criminals and taking containers of food to poor people around the globe, what he indeed does in *Superman: Peace on Earth*.

Regarding the colors, Superman dresses red and blue, as stated above. These colors are easily related to the USA, in the same manner that yellow and green might easily bring Brazil to the mind of a reader familiar with the colors of the Brazilian flag. As an icon, the flag of the United States of America represents concepts, ideas and philosophies and the colors play a relevant role in constructing its meaning. The red color in the horizontal stripes stands for hardiness and valor, while the blue in the broad band above the stripes stands for vigilance, perseverance and justice (Streufner, 1994).

Similarly, the colors of Superman’s uniform lead us to conclude that the meanings attributed to the colors in the American flag are unquestionably traces of the hero’s personality: hardiness, valor, vigilance, perseverance and justice are the main characteristics of Superman and those qualities might be the reason why, when working together with other super-heroes, Superman usually plays the role of leader of the group. He might not be the most powerful super-hero in comic books and might not be able to beat an enemy on his own,

but he is able to guide the others to victory. In this context, it is easy to think of Superman as a metaphorical representation of the USA, which are usually portrayed in terms of their superiority and leadership in relation to other countries.

### 3.7 Summary of the chapter.

In this chapter I have analyzed the role of a set of pictures in the presentation of reality in *Superman: Peace on Earth*. I have explored the ideational meanings, that is, the form they represent reality, in a set of pictures which were divided into the categories of in-group and out-group, according to van Leeuwen (2001). I have made use of the Conceptual processes (Analytical and Symbolic processes) as proposed by Kress & van Leeuwen (1996). In addition, another set of pictures referring to Rio de Janeiro were analyzed from another perspective: that of the interpersonal meanings, exploring the representation and interaction between represented participants and the viewer. The role of colors and the potential meanings Superman himself and his uniform might carry were exploited in this chapter, in accordance with the Symbolic process.

To begin with, I have presented the concept of text which guides my analysis. Text is seen here as a dimension of discourse which is part of a productive and interpretative process (Fairclough, 1989). Insofar as this process comprises both producer and consumer, it brings into play particular interpretations of the world and how participants make sense of events represented in a text. Furthermore, I have delimited the use of the term 'image' and how it relates to words in a comic book.

Much more has to be added to this discussion in relation to the written text and the icons employed in this comic book, exploring ideological aspects embedded in their narrative as well as in their art. The large amount of still unexplored features of *Superman – Peace on Earth*, such as words, may provide a rich source for discussion in further studies.

## CHAPTER 4

### The role of words in *Superman: Peace on Earth*

“...simplicity is always convincing...”  
(Kress & Hodge, 1979, p. 59)

#### 4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I concentrate on the investigation of the role of clauses in the in-group x out-group representation (van Dijk, 2001) in *Superman: Peace on Earth*. For accomplishing my aim I have assorted the written part of the text into two groups: clauses concerning the USA, which will be referred to as in-group, and clauses relating to South American, East Europe and Africa, which will be called out-group.

The theoretical background regarding discourse and ideology, which will support the analysis, will be provided by Fairclough (1992) and van Dijk (2001, 1998), already presented in Chapter 3 (sections 3.1 and 3.2). Halliday's (1995) Functional Grammar will be used as a tool in the categorization of the clauses through the transitivity system. The results of the data analysis and the discussion regarding its implications will follow the theoretical review which will be expanded in section 4.1 below.

#### 4.1 Transitivity

The study of linguistics in the western world, since its origins with the ancient Greeks, was carried out in the following order: scholars would first investigate words (morphology), then, the sequence of these words would be studied in terms of what those scholars called syntax, i.e., the relation between words when laid together. Finally, after examining the forms, they would inquire their meanings (Halliday, 1994). Conversely, Halliday's functional grammar approaches texts the other way around. First, meanings are inquired and then forms are examined in order to verify how meanings were achieved. The author argues that “this

puts the forms of a language in a different perspective: as means to an end, rather than as an end in themselves” (Halliday, 1994, p. xiv).

Language is the instrument that enables us to “build a mental picture of reality” and it is mainly through language that we get to understand what happens around us (Halliday, 1994, p. 106). Potential meanings which might be conveyed through language are accomplished in the grammar of the clause, which besides “being a mode of action, of giving and demanding goods-&-services and information (...) is also a mode of reflection, of imposing order on the endless variation and flow of events” (idem). Transitivity is the grammatical system which enables us to convey those potential meanings and comprises three main processes. *Mental Processes* are related to inner experiences and to consciousness, whereas the *Material Processes* encompass outer experiences. The *Relational Processes* are the ones by which we classify and identify our experiences.

Furthermore, there are also three minor processes. *Behavioural Processes*, which refer to physiological states; *Verbal Processes*, which include the representations created by the human consciousness and expressed through language, such as saying and meaning and the *Existential Processes*, that refer to existence. These minor processes sometimes are not clear-cut and they may depend a great deal on context in order to be classified. This is specially true for behavioural processes and for this reason I shall not take them into consideration, since the line that separates such processes from material and mental processes is too tenuous to be considered. Thus, I will classify behavioural processes as material or mental, depending on the closer meaning in context.

Processes are basically formed by three components: a verb, which will be the process itself, the participants in the process, and also circumstances, which bear a relationship with the on-going process.

In the processes of doing, or *Material Processes*, there might be one or two participants involved. There is always an *Actor* in a process of doing, and it may involve, or not, a second participant, which can be called *Goal*. The *Actor* is the one who undertakes the action, while the *Goal* is the one who might 'suffer' the doing, as in the example below:

I	fit	the tree	into place	as	the crowd	cheers
Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance		Actor	P: Material

Regarding *Mental Processes*, or processes of sensing, Halliday argues that the terminology *Actor/Goal* might not be appropriate to refer to the participants, insofar as there is not a *doer* acting on someone or something. Moreover, the participant in a *Mental Process* is always human, when not used metaphorically, since it refers to processes such as *feeling*, *thinking* or *perceiving*. Therefore, the main participant will be an active one, the *Senser*. The second participant in the process will be a non-active participant called *Phenomenon*.

She	needs	food and a doctor
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

*Relational Processes* are divided into *attributive* and *identifying*. In an *attributive* process there is a *Carrier* to whom a certain *Attribute* is assigned. In this process, the relationship is established through the verb *to be* or synonym. In identifying processes there are two participants involved: the *Identified* and the *Identifier*. The subdivision of Relational Processes go further than simply the *attributive* and *identifying* one, but I will attain my attention to these two groups since they seem to be enough for this study.

The great city below me	is	a painful example	of that distance
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

*Verbal Processes* are usually composed of three participants: *Sayer*, *Receiver* and *Verbiage*. The *Sayer* is responsible for the process while the *Receiver* is the one to whom the process is directed. The *Verbiage* is defined by Egins as “a noun expressing some kind of verbal behaviour (e.g. *statement, questions, retort, story*)” (1994, p. 252). *Existential Processes* “represent that something exists or happens” (Halliday, 1994, p. 142), and involve the word *there* plus the verb *to be*.

The despot	tells	me	he is a tolerant man
Sayer	P: Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage

“there	is	no reason for you to waste your precious time in our humble land.
	P: Existential	Existent

The *circumstantial elements* are the third component involved in a process. According to Halliday “they occur freely in all types of process, and with essentially the same significance wherever they occur” (1994, p. 149-150). For a better understanding of the different circumstantial elements I will reproduce below a table in which Halliday (1994, p. 151) classifies the categories and their different subtypes:

Types of circumstantial element		
	Type	Specific categories (subtypes)
1	Extent	distance, duration
2	Location	place, time
3	Manner	means, quality, comparison
4	Cause	reason, purpose, behalf
5	Contingency	condition, concession, default
6	Accompaniment	comitation, addition
7	Role	guise, product
8	Matter	
9	Angle	

Insofar as my aim is to deconstruct the text and examine how the USA is represented in opposition to East European, African and South American countries, I selected all the parts in the comic books in which the narration refers to one of these groups. Afterwards, I



analyzed the processes and the constituents of these clauses according to the transitivity model proposed by Halliday. Once the analysis of transitivity is carried out Critical Discourse Analysis plays an important role in the interpretation of the lexico-grammatical patterns found in the text.

#### 4.2 The analysis

Clauses were divided into two main headings: those referring to the in-group and those concerning the out-group. After analyzing the clauses in accordance with Halliday's transitivity system I separated the verb processes into the five categories I am interested in, obtaining the following tables:

Table 4.1: Occurrence of processes related to in-group

Material	Relational	Mental	Verbal	Existential
30	10	12	3	1

Table 4.2: Occurrence of processes related to out-group

Material	Relational	Mental	Verbal	Existential
65	25	20	8	3

Then, the data regarding each group were displayed in a pie figure in order to have the numbers represented in percentage, so that the two tables could be examined and compared more accurately.

Figure 4.1A: Processes regarding the in-group

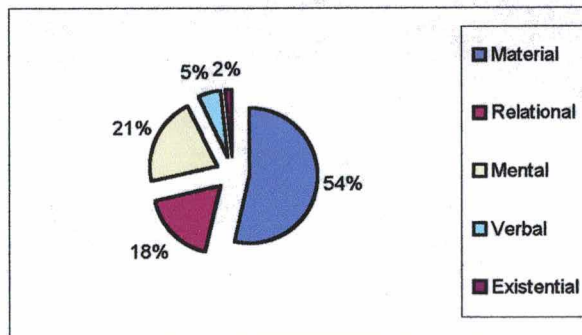


Figure 4.1B: Processes regarding the out-group

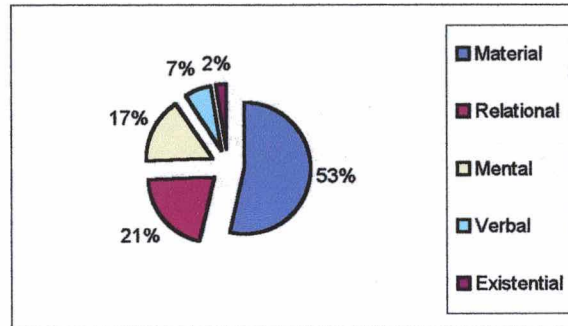


Figure 4.1A above shows that most of the verb processes regarding the in-group are of the Material type, such as the ones in the examples below.

If	I	give	him	this food
	Actor	P: Material	Beneficiary	Goal

he	will	keep	it	or	resell	it
Actor		P: Material	Goal		P: Material	Goal

Either way	he	will	profit	and	his people	will	starve
	Actor		P: Material		Actor		P: Material

The second type with a highest percentage was of the Mental type, that is, clauses referring, mainly, to how Superman feels or thinks regarding what is around him.

I	feel	that I'm off to a promising start
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

But	in a war torn European country	I	wonder	if there is any hope left to keep alive
	Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

Relational processes, related to “the many different ways in which ‘being’ can be expressed in English clauses” (Eggs, 1994, p. 255), held the third place in the percentage of occurrences.

The great city below me	is	a painful example	of that distance
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

From up here	it	looks like	a jewel, bright and beautiful
Circumstance	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

Verbal and Existential processes had a low percentage of occurrence and I will not take them into consideration for my analysis.

In Figure 4.1B, the occurrence of Material processes is very close in percentage to Figure 4.1A. Nevertheless, in the out-group, the occurrence of Relational processes is higher than that of processes of the Mental type. It suggests that, when referring to the out-group, Superman is more engaged in categorizing them than actually expressing how he feels or what he thinks regarding the out-group.

In a follow-up moment, I have arranged the three sets of verb processes with the highest occurrence, namely Material, Relational and Mental types, into positive and negative<sup>1</sup> ones, as follows.

Table 4.3: Occurrence of in-group processes classified as positive/negative

Material		Relational		Mental		Verbal		Existential	
+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
28	2	8	2	8	4	3	0	1	0

Table 4.4: Occurrence of out-group processes classified as positive/negative

Material		Relational		Mental		Verbal		Existential	
+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-
20	45	5	20	9	11	4	4	0	3

The positive and negative headings allude to the connotation clauses have in context. After having classified and quantified them, I have checked the implied meanings carried by verb processes and their constituents (such as adjectives, nouns), and assorted the results in Figures 4.2A and 4.2B. Obtaining the percentage of clauses with a positive or negative implied meaning among the three main processes is in accordance with the ideological strategies I

<sup>1</sup> Such categorization into positive and negative was based on common sense, evaluating the connotation of nouns, adjectives and verbs used in the narrative.

have presented in Chapter 3 (section 3.1). It will help me identify how the emphasizing/de-emphasizing strategy regarding in-group x out-group takes place in the lexical choices used.

Figure 4.2A: Rate of positive/negative connotation of processes in in-group

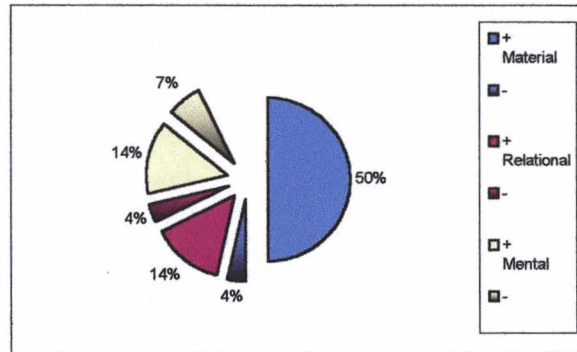
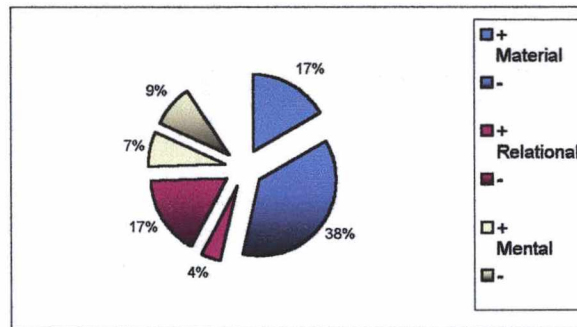


Figure 4.2B: Rate of positive/negative connotation of processes in out-group



Subsequently, I have compared each individual process from figures 4.2A and 4.2B in percentage, achieving the following results:

Table 4.5: Percentage of positive/negative connotation in processes between groups

Processes	in-group		out-group	
	+	-	+	-
Material	93%	7%	31%	69%
Relational	80%	20%	20%	80%
Mental	67%	33%	45%	55%

As displayed in Figure 4.5, 93% of the Material processes in the in-group possess a positive connotation, with only 7% left of clauses with a negative meaning. Conversely, the

majority of Material processes (69%) in the out-group hold a negative meaning. Similarly, the same relation may be established among Relational processes. An amount of 80% of the processes regarding the in-group possess a positive connotation, whereas 20% of the Relational processes for the out-group are attributed a negative meaning, which is a proportionally inverse relationship. Mental processes, in Table 4.5, present a total of 67% of clauses with a positive connotation. For the out-group, the percentage of Mental processes with a positive and negative connotation does not vary so much (45% and 55%, respectively). These numbers were also assorted in general terms, revealing that, overall, most of the processes regarding the in-group hold a positive meaning, as can be seen in Table 4.6. On the other hand, in the out-group it is the opposite: 69% of the total amount of processes are negative, while only 31% are positive.

Table 4.6: Occurrence of clauses with positive x negative meaning

in-group		out-group	
+	-	+	-
48 (86%)	8 (14%)	38 (31%)	83 (69%)

The presence of clauses that are inversely proportional in connotation harmonizes quite perfectly with two of the propositions made by van Dijk (2001), concerning ideological strategies. According to van Dijk, this opposition could be regarded as a strategy of emphasizing positive things about Us versus emphasizing negative things about Them, as exemplified by the two Mental processes below:

This girl	is starving
Actor	P: Material

She	needs	food and a doctor
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

I	know	both can be found at the downtown rescue mission
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

But for today at least	they	will	see	that one person didn't look away
	Senser		P: Mental	Phenomenon

The first three lines above refer to the moment when Superman finds a young girl about to faint among the crowd, when he brings the pine tree. The hero quickly realizes the girl is starving and then takes her to the rescue mission, where he will certainly find people who will look after her, as well as shelter for that moment of need. In the fourth line the man of steel is in Rio de Janeiro, where "they" refers to the children he found in the streets. According to him, the problem of homeless children is easy to look away. However, Superman does not accuse anybody, even though the ones responsible for that situation are, implicitly, local people. The hero makes it clear that he will do it differently and will stand for those in need. On the other hand, the first three sentences contribute to making the reader suppose that, although there are social problems in the USA, there are the antidotes for those problems. Nevertheless, the fourth line represents a different situation: In Brazil there are social problems and the people to whom they might concern usually look away, which matches the other two ideological strategies proposed by van Dijk (2001): de-emphasize negative things about Us and de-emphasize positive things about Them.

Going further into details, it is feasible to imply that the atmosphere in the USA starts to be established with the following line:

Families and friends	gather	to reaffirm	old bonds	and	remember	absent loved ones.
Actor	P: Mat	P: Material	Goal		P: Mental	Phenomenon

The Goal of the material verbs creates an idyllic scene of people who share the same feelings which are based on love, as they seem to care about each other and remember those who are not among them anymore.

and faith, in its infinite forms,	brings	joy	to every heart.
-----------------------------------	--------	-----	-----------------

Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance
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people	are most inclined to act	with compassion and kindness
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

see	in each other	a fellow soul
P: Mental	Circumstance	Phenomenon

The three sentences above show how these people have faith, and the positive consequences it brings to their lives. These people are depicted as having a heart full of love and happiness, the holiday season cooperating to make this feeling even bigger as they are capable of compassionate and kind attitudes.

As the huge and beautiful Christmas tree is fitted downtown by Superman, the crowd is there to see the event, which is repeated year after year. The crowd cheers when the hero fits the tree, which is classified as *simple, kind of funny* and *old-fashioned*, attributing to the tree and the gesture of fitting it in its place a sort of ordinariness.

The tree	is	a simple gesture
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

Kind of funny and old-fashioned	but	I	've been bringing	it	for years
Attribute		Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance

The form how the beginning of Christmas is portrayed and the environment as a whole is depicted might be seen in the following lines:

With a swirl of color and a flash of lights	the holiday season	has officially begun
Circumstance	Actor	P: Material

Deep inside	I	Am	a kid	again
Circumstance	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

I	walk	through bright streets bustling with life	
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance	
	The streets	are	bright
	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

bustling	with life
P: Material	Circumstance

In such a perfect world, so much happiness makes Superman feel like a child again. Children are the ones who most enjoy this holiday, and are usually referred to as having a pure and kind heart. It seems that everyone shares the same feeling if we take into consideration the attribute given to the streets and the circumstance that modifies the verb 'walk': the bright streets which are bustling with life.

The action goes on and Superman decides to interfere in the problem of hunger in the world. This is where the action changes from the faithful and joyful USA to a reality which is different from that in the beginning:

Winter in the American southwest	Is	bitter and cold
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

From this point and on, the environment will suffer a slight change, as the attributes and circumstances accompanying the processes acquire a rather negative, derogatory nuance.

Now, streets are not bustling with life anymore. People are not celebrating Christmas, but they seem to be striving to survive. If, in the USA people "cheer", "gather to reaffirm old bonds", every other place Superman goes to is crowded with people who are in a rather contrasted situation. Now, the reader has to deal with people who have seen "uncountable horrors", and who are "silent", indicating that they are resigned to their social conditions.

People	here	have seen	uncountable horrors
Senser	Circumstance	P: Mental	Phenomenon

and then	they	move back	pale and silent as ghosts
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

and many (people)	fearing	they will be left out
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon



but	aimed	at the gaunt souls across the river
	P: Material	Circumstance

I	can	see	the desperate faces and shrunken bodies inside
Senser		P: Mental	Phenomenon

All the sentences above hold a negative meaning. The Circumstance attached to the material process “move back” might also be interpreted as an attribute to the Actor in the clause, if we unfold the clause and “they move back (and are) pale and silent as ghosts”, where “pale and silent as ghosts” would function as an Attribute to the Carrier “they”, that accompanies the Relational process “are”.

In the third sentence we find matching incompatibilities (Winter, 1986) with people “fearing” as an opposite pair to people “cheering” when the Christmas tree is fitted into place. In the USA we find “fellow souls”, while in the out-group we find “gaunt souls”, also alluded to as “desperate faces and shrunken bodies”. During Christmas, children “whisper secrets” in the USA, while in the slums somewhere in South America they “bathe in gutter water”:

Children	whisper	secret wishes
Sayer	P: Verbal	Verbiage

the crowded slums where	children	bathe	in gutter water
Circumstance: place	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

Similarly, the streets are bright in the USA, while in the same place in South America there are rats in the streets.

and	rats	run	openly	in the streets
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance: means	Circumstance: place

This opposition again further illustrates what van Dijk names as ‘the overall strategy of most ideological discourse’ (2001): say positive things about Us; say negative things about Them.

There are other moments in the narrative in which we verify the occurrence of the last two principles proposed by van Dijk, (de-emphasize negative things about Us and de-emphasize positive things about Them). Right after leaving the bitter and cold American southwest Superman flies to Brazil, in South America. This is the only country we are able to identify for sure due to the presence of the Christ in one of the pictures found in the comic book. Thus, we presume the hero is arriving in Rio de Janeiro. The first lines about Rio are the following:

From up here	it	looks like	a jewel, bright and beautiful
Circumstance: place	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

This is one of the few clauses in which a positive attribute refers to a country pertaining to the out-group. Rio de Janeiro is probably the most famous Brazilian city abroad, and it is known all over the world due to its landscapes, carnival, beautiful women, beaches, soccer, the Christ and the Sugar Loaf, for instance. These features seem to corroborate the maintenance of status Rio possesses of 'wonderful city' as it is sometimes alluded to. We might presuppose, therefore, that the presence of Rio in the pages of such a well-designed comic book is a compliment. Nevertheless, the lines that come ahead prove us wrong:

Looking	closer	I	see	the favelas
P: Material	Circumstance	Carrier	P: Mental	Phenomenon

the crowded slums where	children	bathe	in gutter water
Circumstance: place	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

families	live	in boxes
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance: place

and	rats	run	openly	in the streets
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance: means	Circumstance: place

As Superman gets closer to the city, the reader has to deal with ‘reality’, as he or she is informed that, lying under that breathtaking view so constant in postcards there are homeless children. The presence of rats living together with children helps to emphasize the high level of deterioration the city faces.

It	is	all too easy	to look away	pretend	the problem	doesn't exist
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	P: Material	P: Mental	Existential	Existent

But for today at least	they	will	see	that one person didn't look away
	Senser		P: Mental	Phenomenon
One person	made	the effort	to act	
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	

and, along with a day's food	gave	them	a reason	to keep hoping	Keep trying
Circumstance	P: Material	Beneficiary	Goal	P: Mental	P: Material

The sentences above show, however, that in spite of the incapability and lack of interest of local authorities to solve or even diminish the suffering of those children there is someone who cares about them. If we think of Superman as typifying the USA and its citizens we would be led to interpret it in the following manner: children in Rio de Janeiro are poor, helpless insofar as there is no one to care for them; fortunately, North Americans are compassionate and kind, and have the will and economic means to bring comfort to Brazilian ‘gaunt souls’ and to feed those children. Consequently, the narrative fosters the idea of the USA as being a powerful and rich country by depreciating Rio’s ‘reality’ through negative attributes.

In a like manner, the same process occurs in an inverted position when the narrative is still characterizing the cheerful Christmas atmosphere in the USA. Right after fitting the tree in its place Superman hears a cry for help. He goes for it and, astonished, finds a young girl about to faint among the crowd, due to hunger. His actions are then depicted as follows:

I	sweep	her	up	to safety	and	she	faints
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	Circumstance		Actor	P: Material

At first	I	think	it	is	from shock
Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Carrier	P: Relational	Circumstance

Then	I	notice	how light she is in my arms, so pale and thin				
	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon				
			how light	she	is	in my arms	so pale and thin
			Attribute	Carrier	P: Relational	Circumstance	Attribute

This girl	is starving
Actor	P: Material

She	needs	food and a doctor
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

I	know	both can be found at the downtown rescue mission
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

The phenomena found in the last two lines above can be classified as a problem/solution pair. After saving the girl to safety, as the circumstance in the first line indicates, Superman realizes what the matter is all about and promptly takes her to a place where he knows people will look after her. The one responsible for the rescue mission is portrayed in the following manner:

Dr. Rebecca Mason	is	a friend
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

who	has spent	the major portion of her life	working	with the city's homeless and hungry
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	Circumstance:

She	has seen	many cases	like the poor girl in my arms
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon	Circumstance: comparison

yet always	has	compassion	for one more
	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

It can be inferred that, since Dr. Mason is the one responsible for the mission, the attribute assigned to her might be extended to her staff, as it is a team work. Furthermore, even though one may identify social problems in the North-American society, that very society provides

the means for diminishing or solving them. Again, ‘compassion’ is used, indirectly, as an attribute of the North-American society that leads them to care for each other. It might be implicit that, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, compassion is an attribute lacking in our society.

It is not my intention to say that the points I have raised in here and also those that still need to be tackled on were purposeful and meticulously planned to be included in the narrative in order to praise North-American society (the in-group) and, reversibly, depreciate other societies (the out-group). As a matter of fact, the intentions of the authors seem to be quite different. Such intentions look like a call for people to look at social problems afflicting people all over the world. Nevertheless, group representations seem to be based on common sense. As Fairclough (1992), has stated, ideology is more effective when regarded as common sense. This might be identified in hasty generalizations found in *Superman: Peace on Earth*, as in the example below.

I	next	fly	to south
Actor		P: Material	Circumstance: location

to countries where	there	is	almost no middle ground between wealth and poverty
Circumstance: place		P: Existential	Existent

Hasty generalizations “are based on observations which are insufficient or not representative” (van Eemeren *et al*, 1996, as cited in Heberle, 1999, p.325). The assumption that “there is almost no middle ground between wealth and poverty” does not seem to result from scientific data but purely on observation. As a result, “readers are impelled to agree with what is said (...) or at least plausibly accept those statements as being true” (Heberle, 1999, p.326).

#### 4.3 Summary of the chapter

In this chapter I have reviewed the theories that support the lexicon analysis of *Superman – Peace on Earth*. I have presented (section 4.1) Halliday’s transitivity as an

auxiliary tool which would be applied for analyzing clauses referring to the in-group and out-group as a way of unveiling ideological representations and strategies. By analyzing the use of these language resources I have aimed at taking readers, students or not, to perceive comic books in a more critical way, insofar as the medium is still regarded nowadays as a sort of sub-literature with not much to offer, neither good nor bad.

## Chapter 5

### Final remarks

#### 5.0 Conclusion and suggestions for further research

This study was theoretically based on the bi-directional relationship between discourse and social practice as postulated by Fairclough (1992). Texts, whether written or spoken, are affected by social structure insofar as they are produced in the context of real social institutions and for specific purposes. As a result, there are ideological views embedded in their representation of the world. Taking such theoretical perspectives into account, I aimed at investigating textual, graphic and ideological aspects embedded in the comic book *Superman – Peace on Earth*.

In order to reach my objective, I divided the data into two different segments: words and images, as proposed by Barthes (1977) and McCloud (1996) with respect to the critical study of visual communication. For the first segment, that of images, I made use of Kress & van Leeuwen's (1996) Conceptual representations and interactional meanings for exploring a set of pictures selected for analysis. In respect to the second segment, that of words, I applied Halliday's (1994) lexicogrammatical system of transitivity. The investigation of processes and their constituents provided insightful ideas concerning the structure of ideological strategies as proposed by van Dijk (2001), that is, the in-group vs. out-group representation.

The investigation I have undertaken was an attempt to find the answers for the research questions below, which I have first presented in Chapter 1. Now, I intend to focus on the discussion of these questions.

1. What conceptual values do images have in the pictorial part of the text?
2. What ideational values do processes have in the written part of the text?

3. How are the different countries depicted in *Superman – Peace on Earth* ideologically represented in this super-hero comic book?

Attempting to answer the three questions above demands to evoke some of the findings I have presented in Chapters 3 and 4.

In Chapter 3, I have dealt with the pictorial examination. A selected set of images was divided into the categories in-group and out-group, in accordance with van Dijk's (2001) proposition. In the analysis of each set of images, it could be identified that colors are employed to establish the ambience and set differences between the in-group and the out-group. For the in-group, colors are predominantly vivid, while in the out-group colors have an opaque tone which contributes to the composition of a gloomy, sober atmosphere that permeates the representation of the out-group. Moreover, in the in-group, represented participants are, most of the time, engaged in leisure activities, such as the gathering for the Christmas tree event, or a party, or simply strolling in the street. Conversely, in the out-group, people "swarm into the village, some crowded into rusting vehicles, others making the trip on foot" (Ross & Dini, 1999, p.37), as words appropriately add meaning to Figure 3.23out.

The angle chosen for each group is also pertinent. Overall, Superman's imposing figure becomes more prominent when he is acting within the out-group. In addition to the color of his uniform, which stands out in the opaque background of the out-group, the angles opted for play a role in the characterization of the hero's imposing attitude. For the out-group, the occurrence of low angles is high, granting Superman with an appearance of superiority. In the in-group, eye-level and high angles predominate and the uniform of the man of steel is sometimes reasonably concealed by the profusion of colors.

In Chapter 4 I have devoted myself to the analysis of clauses, which corroborate with the results found in the examination of images. Clauses were also arranged into two sets of clauses referring to in-group and out-group representation. After the analysis of the processes,



I have detected that those clauses accepted a positive vs. negative meaning categorization. Organizing the total amount of processes in a pie figure in order to obtain an amount in percentage revealed that the divergence between the two groups was considerably high (see Table 4.6, Chapter 4, section 4.2).

The data demonstrates that the difference concerning positive meanings between the two groups is germane. For the in-group, 86% of processes were positive, whereas in the out-group only 31% of processes could be allocated under the same heading. Likewise, the proportion of negative meanings granted to each group is notably meaningful. For the in-group, only 14% of the processes could be identified as possessing a negative meaning, whereas in the out-group a total of 69% of processes had a negative connotation.

The values attributed to images and verb processes reveal that the countries represented in *Superman – Peace on Earth*, allocated in the two separated groups, are depicted in a relation of inequality. Such disparity evokes power issues, as it positions the in-group as the one which holds the conditions to help the out-group. Nevertheless, such help includes interfering in these countries. The hero is shown asking for permission to the American Congress in order to distribute the surplus from the crops, but he is not shown requesting such permission to those countries he intends to go to, which heralds a disrespectful assault against the sovereignty of the nations represented in the out-group. It seems to be taken for granted that, just because a certain group is alleged to need some help, a foreign entity (or a person) may enter the country and try to solve problems, interfering in their internal affairs. Had it not been regarded as commonsense, it would not be dealt with in a mass communication medium so overtly.

*Superman – Peace on Earth* is meant to be a tale about peace, but also about how it can be achieved if people are willing to help their fellows, placing the responsibility on the shoulders of every reader. However, peace is oversimplified, as it mostly comprises the matter

of hunger in the world and does not take into account, not even slightly, social, political and economic aspects that contribute not only to the matter of hunger but also to the exploitation of people and places, leading to more hunger and wars and, therefore, lack of peace in the world. This oversimplification is Manichaeic to the extent that it displays the problem of hunger in simple terms: there are people who care about it, and people who do not. Hence, it becomes a matter of good vs. evil, in conformity with the Comics Code Authority, a regulatory device which is simplistic and Manichaeic in its core.

Critics (Inge, 1996; Harvey, 1996; Reynolds, 1992; Savage Jr., 1990) claim that such duality was imposed on comics by the Comics Code, which was created by the comics industry before they were regulated by more severe rules by the North-American Congress. Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that such duality was only latent. This duality is probably more than simply arranged to compose rules. It is most likely to be rooted in the social structure not only of the North-American society, but of most Western societies as well.

*Época* magazine, on its edition of October 8, 2001( #177), displayed on its cover a letter written by a 22 year-old soldier to his parents in Brazil. He was a crew member of a ship which would fight in Afghanistan. On the cover, three words had been edited and appeared in capital letters: "ARABIA", "BEM" and "MAL". The matter here is not who is wrong or right, good or evil. It is a matter of manipulating information and reducing complex social issues to two antagonistic words and ascribing evil to an opponent. In *Superman – Peace on Earth*, manipulation is of a different kind. Good is ascribed to the in-group, and evil is disguised as hunger, which is the overt enemy. However, by making use of subtlety, government and politicians are charged with negligence and corruption as a cause of hunger in the out-group. The construction of evil is appropriate as it sets the difference between the two groups. Evil is made necessary to the existence of good. Concomitantly, the notion of a rich, powerful country is also dependent on an antagonist, that is, a poor, weak country.

Establishing a position of power, dominance and superiority goes beyond the economic sphere. It also includes acting upon the social environment, upon the mass communication mediums consumed by that very society and this is what can be identified in *Superman – Peace on Earth*. There is a dominant ideology operating in a popular culture medium, reinforcing relations of power both at economic and social spheres. The in-group has the means to help and also the self-alleged right to interfere within the out-group.

During the process of creation I realized that working with lexicon and images seemed to be rather ambitious in face of time and space constraints. Along this journey, many possibilities were left aside, and some would be worth revisiting.

Regarding the lexicon, the analysis of interpersonal and textual meanings were deferred, benefiting the investigation of the ideational meanings. Nevertheless, exploring those meanings cast aside would probably provide new glimpses regarding ideological implications in the attempt of *Peace on Earth* to represent reality. Similarly, images could also be examined through narrative representation and modality, adding new perspectives to the current findings.

Expanding the investigation of super-hero to comic books as a genre would require to deal with a greater number of titles and issues. However, it would be very fruitful to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis to examine the bi-directional relationship between the medium and social structure and ways it is influenced by context, such as the facts that have taken place in 2001 which might push comics into a new direction. The first one was the decision of Marvel Comics to publish a mainstream title without the Comics Code Authority stamp of approval. It has been done to one title only but it is likely to be extended to other publications. Anyway, events might head in two directions: a total debility of the code, or a backlash of this mechanism of regulation. Either one or the other, the effects upon comic

books would be remarkable. The second fact that might have some impact upon the medium is the current affairs in the USA regarding the so called war against terrorism.

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## Appendices



## Appendix 1

### The Comics Code Authority.

## Standards of the Comics Code Authority for editorial matter as originally adopted

*Source: Comix, a History of Comic Books in America, by Les Daniels, copyright 1971 by Les Daniels and Mad Peck Studios.*

### Code For Editorial Matter

#### General Standards Part A:

- 1) Crimes shall never be presented in such a way as to create sympathy for the criminal, to promote distrust of the forces of law and justice, or to inspire others with a desire to imitate criminals.
- 2) No comics shall explicitly present the unique details and methods of a crime.
- 3) Policemen, judges, government officials, and respected institutions shall never be presented in such a way as to create disrespect for established authority.
- 4) If crime is depicted it shall be as a sordid and unpleasant activity.
- 5) Criminals shall not be presented so as to be rendered glamorous or to occupy a position which creates the desire for emulation.
- 6) In every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal punished for his misdeeds.
- 7) Scenes of excessive violence shall be prohibited. Scenes of brutal torture, excessive and unnecessary knife and gun play, physical agony, gory and gruesome crime shall be eliminated.
- 8) No unique or unusual methods of concealing weapons shall be shown.
- 9) Instances of law enforcement officers dying as a result of a criminal's activities should be discouraged.
- 10) The crime of kidnapping shall never be portrayed in any detail, nor shall any profit accrue to the abductor or kidnapper. The criminal or the kidnapper must be punished in every case.
- 11) The letters of the word "crime" on a comics magazine shall never be appreciably greater than the other words contained in the title. The word "crime" shall never appear alone on a cover.
- 12) Restraint in the use of the word "crime" in titles or subtitles shall be exercised.

#### General Standards Part B:

- 1) No comic magazine shall use the word "horror" or "terror" in its title.
- 2) All scenes of horror, excessive bloodshed, gory or gruesome crimes, depravity, lust, sadism, masochism shall not be permitted.
- 3) All lurid, unsavory, gruesome illustrations shall be eliminated.
- 4) Inclusion of stories dealing with evil shall be used or shall be published only where the intent is to illustrate a moral issue and in no case shall evil be presented alluringly nor so as to injure the sensibilities of the reader.
- 5) Scenes dealing with, or instruments associated with walking dead, torture vampires and vampirism, ghouls, cannibalism, and werewolfism are prohibited.

#### General Standards Part C:

All elements or techniques not specifically mentioned herein, but which are contrary to the spirit and intent of the Code, and are considered violations of good taste or decency, shall be prohibited.

Dialogue:

- 1) Profanity, obscenity, smut, vulgarity, or words or symbols which have acquired undesirable meanings are forbidden.
- 2) Special precautions to avoid references to physical afflictions or deformities shall be taken.
- 3) Although slang and colloquialisms are acceptable, excessive use should be discouraged and wherever possible good grammar shall be employed.

Religion:

Ridicule or attack on any religious or racial group is never permissible.

Costume:

- 1) Nudity in any form is prohibited, as is indecent or undue exposure.
  - 2) Suggestive and salacious illustration or suggestive posture is unacceptable.
  - 3) All characters shall be depicted in dress reasonably acceptable to society.
  - 4) Females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities.
- NOTE: It should be recognized that all prohibitions dealing with costume, dialogue, or artwork applies as specifically to the cover of a comic magazine as they do to the contents.

Marriage and Sex:

- 1) Divorce shall not be treated humorously nor shall be represented as desirable.
- 2) Illicit sex relations are neither to be hinted at or portrayed. Violent love scenes as well as sexual abnormalities are unacceptable.
- 3) Respect for parents, the moral code, and for honorable behavior shall be fostered. A sympathetic understanding of the problems of love is not a license for moral distortion.
- 4) The treatment of love-romance stories shall emphasize the value of the home and the sanctity of marriage.
- 5) Passion or romantic interest shall never be treated in such a way as to stimulate the lower and baser emotions.
- 6) Seduction and rape shall never be shown or suggested.
- 7) Sex perversion or any inference to same is strictly forbidden.

## Code For Advertising Matter:

These regulations are applicable to all magazines published by members of the Comics Magazine Association of America, Inc. Good taste shall be the guiding principle in the acceptance of advertising.

- 1) Liquor and tobacco advertising is not acceptable.
- 2) Advertisement of sex or sex instructions books are unacceptable.
- 3) The sale of picture postcards, "pin-ups," "art studies," or any other reproduction of nude or semi-nude figures is prohibited.
- 4) Advertising for the sale of knives, conceivable weapons, or realistic gun facsimiles is prohibited.
- 5) Advertising for the sale of fireworks is prohibited.
- 6) Advertising dealing with the sale of gambling equipment or printed matter dealing with gambling shall not be accepted.
- 7) Nudity with meretricious purpose and salacious postures shall not be permitted in the advertising of any product; clothed figures shall never be presented in such a way as to be offensive or contrary to good taste or morals.
- 8) To the best of his ability, each publisher shall ascertain that all statements made in advertisements conform to the fact and avoid misinterpretation.
- 9) Advertisement of medical, health, or toiletry products of questionable nature are to be rejected. Advertisements for medical, health or toiletry products endorsed by the American Medical Association, or the American Dental Association, shall be deemed acceptable if they conform with all other conditions of the Advertising Code.

## Appendix 2

## Clauses referring to the in-group

Families and friends	gather	to reaffirm	old bonds	and	remember	absent loved ones.
Actor	P: Mat	P: Material	Goal		P: Mental	Phenomenon

Children	whisper	secret wishes	and faith, in its infinite forms,	brings	joy	to every heart.
Sayer	P: Verbal	Verbiage	Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance

It	is	a time	when	people	are most inclined to act	with compassion and kindness
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute		Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

and perhaps	for a brief moment	see	in each other	a fellow soul	sharing	the same world
	Circumstance	P: Mental	Circumstance	Phenomenon	P: Material	Goal

I	have always been encouraged	by the goodwill	that	infuses	the many celebrations of this season
Goal	P: Material	Actor	Actor	P: Material	Goal

It	makes	me	feel like sharing	too
Agent	P: Causative	Actor	P: Material	

The tree	is	a simple gesture
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

Kind of funny and old-fashioned	but	I	've been bringing	it	for years
Attribute		Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance

It	is	Kind of funny and old-fashioned
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

And	to be	honest
	P: Relational	Attribute

I	don't think	there is anyone who looks forward to it more than me
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon
		there is anyone who looks forward to it more than me
	P: Existential	Existent

I	fit	the tree	into place	as	the crowd	cheers
Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance		Actor	P: Material

Deep inside	I	am	a kid	again
Circumstance	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

With a swirl of color and a flash of lights	the holiday season	has officially begun
Circumstance	Actor	P: Material

They	call out	to me	but	I	keep going
Actor	P: Material	Goal		Actor	P: Material

Then	I	hear	a different sound	almost	hidden	under the roar of the crowd
	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon		P: Material	Circumstance

Faster than a thought	I	dive down	between the crowd and the girl
Circumstance	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

I	sweep	her	up	to safety	and	she	faints
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	Circumstance		Actor	P: Material

At first	I	think	it is from shock				
Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon				
			it	is	from shock		
			Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute		

Then	I	notice	how light she is in my arms, so pale and thin				
	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon				
			how light	she	is	in my arms	so pale and thin
			Attribute	Carrier	P: Relational	Circumstance: place	Attribute

This girl	is starving
Actor	P: Material

She	needs	food and a doctor
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

I	know	both can be found at the downtown rescue mission				
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon				
		both	can be found	at the downtown rescue mission		
		Actor	P: Material	Circumstance		

Dr. Rebecca Mason	is	a friend
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

who	has spent	the major portion of her life	working	with the city's homeless and hungry
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	Circumstance

She	has seen	many cases	like the poor girl in my arms
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon	Circumstance

yet always	has	compassion	for one more
	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

Rebecca	promises	me	the girl will be well cared for			
Sayer	P: Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage			
			the girl	will	be well cared for	
			Carrier		P: Material	

She	directs	her staff	to bring	some nourishing broth	and	prepare	another bed
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	Goal		P: Material	Goal

I	walk	through bright streets bustling with life				
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance				
		The streets	are	bright		
		Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute		
		bustling		with life		
		P: Material		Circumstance		

Charles Dickens	once	described	this season	as a time "when want is keenly felt and abundance rejoices."
Sayer		P: Verbal	Verbiage	Circumstance

Sadly	the first part of that statement	is	often	ignored
Circumstance	Phenomenon		P: Mental	

as if	acknowledging the unfortunate among us	would dampen	the merriment of the holidays
	Actor	P: Material	Goal

## Appendix 2

## Clauses referring to the out-group

Winter in the American southwest	is	bitter and cold
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

The old man	has come	a long way
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

The man	is	old
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

He	is	looking for	food and fuel
Actor		P: Material	Goal

but	at this time of year	the desert	has	precious little to offer
	Circumstance	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute
				to offer
				P: Material

From high above	I	hear	him sigh
Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon
			him sigh
			Actor P: Material

as	he	gathers up	his small armful of firewood
	Actor	P: Material	Goal

Then	I	hear	him gasp
	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon
			him gasp
			Actor P: Material

I	tell	him	what I will tell many others today
Sayer	P: Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage
			what I will tell many others today
			Sayer P: Verbal Receiver

That	the food	is	for him and his people
	Token/Identified	P: Relational	Value/Identifier

All I ask in return	is	his help in getting the grain to those who need it most
Token/Identified	P: Relational	Value/Identifier

All	I	ask	in return	is	his help	in getting the grain to those who need it most
Verbiage	Sayer	P: Verbal	Circumstance	P: Relational	Token/Identified	Value/Identifier

in getting	the grain	to those	who	need	it	most
P: Material	Goal	Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon	Circumstance

the old man	smiles	and	nods	his agreement
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Actor	P: Material		P: Material	Range
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I	wish	him well	
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon	
		him	well <sup>1</sup>
		Carrier	Attribute

as	I	hurry back	to my route
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

I	feel	that I'm off to a promising start	
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon	
		I	am off
		Actor	P: Material
			to a promising start
			Circumstance

I	next	fly	to south
Actor		P: Material	Circumstance

to countries where	there	is	almost no middle ground between wealth and poverty
Circumstance		P: Existential	Existent

The great city below me	is	a painful example	of that distance
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

From up here	it	looks like	a jewel, bright and beautiful
Circumstance	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

Looking	closer	I	see	the favelas
P: Material	Circumstance	Carrier	P: Mental	Phenomenon

the crowded slums where	children	bathe	in gutter water
Circumstance	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

families	live	in boxes
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

and	rats	run	openly	in the streets
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance	Circumstance

It	is	all too easy	to look away	pretend	the problem	doesn't exist
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	P: Material	P: Mental	Existential	Existent

or	leave	it	to someone else	to solve
	P: Material	Goal	Beneficiary	P: Material

But for today at least	they	will	see	that one person didn't look away
	Senser		P: Mental	Phenomenon

that	one person	didn't	look away
	Actor		P: Material

One person	made	the effort	to act
Actor	P: Material	Goal	P: Material

<sup>1</sup> I interpret this sentence as a verbless clause: "that he is well".

and, along with a day's food	gave	them	a reason	to keep hoping	Keep trying
Circumstance	P: Material	Beneficiary	Goal	P: Mental	P: Material

With every minute	I	feel	more sure
Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

I	have made	the right decision
Actor	P: Material	Goal

But	in a war torn European country	I	wonder	if there is any hope left to keep alive
	Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon
			there is	any hope left to keep alive
			P: Existential	Existent

People	here	have seen	uncountable horrors
Senser	Circumstance	P: Mental	Phenomenon

People	have seen	their families destroyed their children crippled	by land mines
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon	Circumstance

Their families	are destroyed,	their children	are crippled	by land mines
Goal	P: Material	Goal	P: Material	Actor

A bloody conflict	drags on	without resolution
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

They	come up	slowly	to take	the food
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance	P: Material	Goal

and then	they	move back	pale and silent as ghosts
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

They	are	pale and silent as ghosts
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

By midday	I	have returned	to Africa
Circumstance	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

I	am	determined	to reach	every remote village and settlement
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	P: Material	Goal

News of my visit	has spread	and many (people)	fearing	they will be left out
Actor	P: Material	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon
				they will be left out
				Goal P: Material

they	have arrived	in droves
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

They	swarm	into the village
Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

some	people	are	crowded	into rusting vehicles
	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	Circumstance

others	making	the trip	on foot
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Actor	P: Material	Range	Circumstance
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My next stop	brings	me	in contact with a different kind of beast
Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance

As a reporter	I	am well aware	of the military despot
Circumstance	Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

who	through force and corruption	has seized	control of his country
Actor	Circumstance	P: Material	Goal

He	put on	a grand show of welcome
Actor	P: Material	Goal

Thanking	me	on behalf of his grateful people
Verbal	Receiver	Circumstance

"Truly",	he	cheers	"we are blessed to be among those Superman has favored this day!"
Verbiage	Sayer	P: Verbal	Verbiage

we	are	blessed	to be	among those	Superman	has favored	this day
Senser	P: Relational	Attribute	P: Relational	Circumstance	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

His face	is	a mask of goodwill
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

the despot	says	he stands ready to assist me,				
Sayer	P: Verbal	Verbiage				
	he	stands	ready	to assist	me	
	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	P: Material	Goal	

"In fact,"	he	smiles
	Actor	P: Material

"there	is	no reason for you to waste your precious time in our humble land.			
	P: Existential	Existent			
	for you	to waste	your precious time	in our humble land	
	Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance	

My troops and I	will distribute	the food
Actor	P: Material	Goal

I	know	this man to be a liar and thief		
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon		
	this man	to be	a liar and thief	
	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	

He	has built	his regime on terrorism
Actor	P: Material	Goal

He	has	squandered	his country's resources
Actor	P: Material	Goal	

and	he	has	kept	his people frightened and poor
	Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute	

If	I	give	him	this food
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	Actor	P: Material	Beneficiary	Goal
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he	will	keep	it	or	resell	it
Actor		P: Material	Goal		P: Material	Goal

Either way	he	will	profit	and	his people	will	starve
	Actor		P: Material		Actor		P: Material

As respectfully as I can	I	request	permission to hand out the food myself
	Sayer	P: Verbal	Verbiage
			to hand out      the food      myself
			P: Material      Goal      Actor

The despot's only answer	is	a grinning nod to his troops
Token/Identified	P: Relational	Value/Identifier

Instantly	rifles	are cocked	and	aimed	not	at me
Circumstance	Goal	P: Material		P: Material		Circumstance: place

but	aimed	at the gaunt souls across the river
	P: Material	Goal

The despot	tells	me	he is a tolerant man
Sayer	P: Verbal	Receiver	Verbiage
			he      is      a tolerant man
			Carrier      P: Relational      Attribute

but	my attitude	verges	on a flagrant disregard for his authority and his country's laws
	Actor	P: Material	Circumstance

He	will not have	an outside presence inciting his people to riot
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute
		an outside presence      inciting      his people      to riot
		Actor      P: Material      Goal      P: Material

And so	the day	wears on
	Actor	P: Material

Everywhere	I	stop
Circumstance: location	Actor	P: Material

I	see	hunger and poverty
Senser	P: Mental	Phenomenon

Some	is	a result of circumstance
Identified (Token)	P: Relational	Identifier (Value)

too often	it	is	the product of man's cruelty to man
Circumstance	Token/Identified	P: Relational	Value/Identifier

Oppression	breeds	a spiritual starvation	all its own
Actor	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance

In many places	people	furtively	peek	at me	through cracked doors
Circumstance	Actor	Circumstance: manner	P: Material	Goal	Circumstance:

never	realizing	I	can	see	the desperate faces and shrunken bodies inside
	P: Mental	Senser		P: Mental	Phenomenon

the faces	are	desperate
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute

their bodies	are	shrunken
Carrier	P: Relational	Attribute