

# To read Mattelart/Dorfman, 50 years later: but... what about the comics?

*Para ler Mattelart/Dorfman, 50 anos depois: mas... e os quadrinhos?*

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## ABSTRACT

This text revisits the book *Para Leer al Pato Donald*, published in 1971, and one of the first titles to consolidate the name of Armand Mattelart (along with co-author Ariel Dorfman) in Brazil as a communication theorist, as well as his later comments and interviews after the book. At a later time, we question this (lack of) perception of comics as a kind of *non-object* of research, obscured under the perspective of *cultural imperialism*, under three aspects: the decentralization of Disney production; the problem of translation; and the lack of information on the production of comics in Chile.

**Keywords:** Armand Mattelart, Ariel Dorfman, Disney comics, Chile

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## RESUMO

O presente texto revisita o livro *Para Leer al Pato Donald*, publicado em 1971, um dos títulos fundamentais para iniciar a consolidação do nome de Armand Mattelart (junto com Ariel Dorfman, coautor) no Brasil como teórico da comunicação, juntamente com seus comentários e entrevistas posteriores à obra. Num momento posterior, indagamos a respeito dessa (falta de) percepção dos quadrinhos como uma espécie de *não objeto* de pesquisa, obscurecidos que ficaram sob a ótica do *imperialismo cultural*, em três aspectos: a descentralização da produção Disney; o problema da tradução; e a ausência de informações sobre a produção de quadrinhos no Chile.

**Palavras-chave:** Armand Mattelart, Ariel Dorfman, quadrinhos Disney, Chile

## INTRODUCTION

IF THERE IS a controversial book, throughout its almost 50 years of existence and even today, it is *Para Leer al Pato Donald: Comunicación de Masa y Colonialismo* (How To Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic) (1971/1979), written by Armand Mattelart and the Argentine-Chilean-American novelist<sup>1</sup> Ariel Dorfman in Valparaíso, in 1971, when both lived in Chile. The book, the result of a joint work, makes a strong attack on the Disney universe, based on the critical reading of four comic titles (or *historietas*, as they are known in several Latin American countries) published in Chile at that time: *Disneylandia*, *Tío Rico* (Scrooge McDuck), *Fantasia* and *Tribilin* (Goofy). This attack occurs on several fronts: the absence of the traditional family (fathers and mothers are replaced by uncles, aunts and grandparents in general); how women, the good savage and underdeveloped peoples are represented; search for gold (or similar things, such as treasures or fame); work representation; and iteration and repetition of the story narrative structures of this universe. In the end, enumerating these aspects would have a single purpose: to demonstrate how imperialist logic was reproduced in Disney world comics, which were seen as originally *innocent* or *naive*.

However critical the book may be, Mattelart himself seems to relativize his historical look before it to the point of not retaking it in his later works, bibliographical references or theoretical analyzes, or to *carry a certain fate* on account of this publication, even if he considers it relevant.<sup>2</sup> In an interview, for example, when asked about the book and what was called *cultural imperialism* at that time, before beginning his answer, he metaphorically states: “I have this blood on my hands” (A. Mattelart & Sénecal, 2008, p. 10).<sup>3</sup>

Two examples of Mattelart’s effacement of this book (which cannot be taken in a generalized way) are in works such as *Histoire des théories de la communication* (A. Mattelart & M. Mattelart, 1997) or *Penser les médias* (A. Mattelart & M. Mattelart, 1986/2004), both written with Michèle Mattelart. In the first case, nothing was said about the book in the topic “*Impérialisme*

<sup>1</sup> Ariel Dorfman was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on May 6, 1942; naturalized Chilean in 1967; and has been a citizen of the United States since 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The greater number of references to Armand Mattelart in this text does not mean that, in our view and to the detriment of Ariel Dorfman, he is the main author of *Para Leer al Pato Donald*; it just means that we focus on Mattelart’s perceptions of the work. In particular, we perceive the book as it has always been seen, a joint work.

<sup>3</sup> In the original: “Je traîne ça comme une casserole.” This and other translations made by the author. In a literal sense, *traîner une casserole* would mean “dragging a pan”; however, the French expression can also be translated by phrases such as “having made mistakes in the past” or “having a dirty past.” In the context of this interview, we chose to use “I have this blood on my hands.”

*culturel*” (pp. 66-68), although Latin America and the socialist experience of Salvador Allende’s government are cited, as well as another Mattelart’s own bibliographic reference; in the second case, a study that aims to better understand the scientific and intellectual production on the media of that time (mid-1980s), there is no reference either. We find a shy mention in the work written with Éric Neveu, *Introdução aos Estudos Culturais*<sup>4</sup> (A. Mattelart & Neveu, 2004), where, when commenting on the birth of a *madonnalogy* (a field of studies on the pop singer Madonna), he remembers that, for having written a *book about Donald Duck*, he would be little suspect of legitimacy in that area, since

“Small” cultural objects, especially when massively consumed, can lead to “big” issues. The strategy in this sense presupposes a rigorous research work, the analysis of the contents, the logic of production, diffusion and reception, especially regarding their possible ideological impacts. (p. 186)

As for Dorfman, the book only apparently appears to be occasional in his production: if, on the one hand, he is a “militant writer, obsessed with the theme of exile, the tortured and disappeared of dictatorships”<sup>5</sup> (Cáceres et al., 2005, p. 359), on the other, in 1974 he published another title with a similar perspective, now with Chilean researcher Manuel Jofré: *Superman y Sus Amigos del Alma*<sup>6</sup> (Superman and His Cronies), in addition to dedicating himself to work at Quimantú publishing house (which will be seen later). It turns out that, unlike what is suggested by the previous quotation (and as we will show below), Mattelart and Dorfman do not deepen, for example, the analysis to the level of Disney comics production and diffusion logic, or even of reception, focusing mainly on the analysis of their contents and possible ideological impacts; within a macro view, they end up ignoring micro aspects.

One of the remaining questions is: what do Mattelart and Dorfman understand by *comics* in the scope of this work, which influenced several researchers in Brazil shortly after its publication? Although it achieved editorial fame and repercussion in the area of communication, *Para Leer al Pato Donald* helped stigmatize comics (and not just Disney ones) as an

<sup>4</sup> Brazilian edition of *Introduction aux cultural studies*, published in 2003.

<sup>5</sup> In the original: “escritor militante, obsesionado por el tema del exilio, los torturados y desaparecidos de las dictaduras”.

<sup>6</sup> Published in Brazil in 1978, with the title *Super-Homem e Seus Amigos do Peito*, by Paz & Terra publishing house, the same which published *Para Ler o Pato Donald*, Brazilian edition of the work under study.

ideological pressure instrument; at no time the authors analyze its potential (e.g., revolutionary form or critical product). In addition, there is the impression that comics could not be perceived in a different perspective within the Chilean reality. In this attack on the (imperialist) Disney comics, there was also an indirect attack on the comics in general, later reinforced by similar titles (as the aforementioned *Superman y Sus Amigos del Alma*). All of this helped reinforce the notion that comics were a kind of *subliterature* and/or were only at the service of imperialism, and nothing more.

Here, we revisited the work *Para Leer al Pato Donald* and the comments made, and the interviews given by Mattelart himself. Subsequently, we addressed the (lack of) perception of comics as a kind of *non-object* of research, under three aspects (among others) that we consider important for research on comics: the decentralization of Disney production; the issue of translation into different languages and cultures; and the lack of information about comics produced in Chile.

### THE WORK, THE CONTEXT

Understanding *Para Leer al Pato Donald* means going back to the early 1970s and remembering that the work was written during Salvador Allende's regime. Mattelart refers to this work as a *circumstance book*.

It was a *pamphlet* [emphasis added], which we have written under very particular conditions in Chile, that is, when the Popular Unity, Salvador Allende's regime, has been there for three years. In parallel with the research on other models of mass culture, of magazines for children, young people and women, we elaborated a critique of this form of expression. (Leite Neto, 2001, parag. 9)

What exactly does Mattelart mean by *pamphlet* within that context? When reading the Brazilian edition, we find in the preface, signed by Álvaro de Moya (2002), the information that the book “must therefore be seen as a *pamphlet* [emphasis added], a *sectarian, political, radical, leftist, anti-imperialist* and *anti-colonialist* work in its good and its bad way [emphasis added]” (p. 9); later, in the last paragraph, Moya recalls that the book is “the fruit of Allende period in Chile” and that it is an “authors' contribution to the study and emergence of other works analyzing the phenomenon of mass communications and imperialist action” (p. 11). However, when faced with the 1972 Mexican edition, we are introduced by a preface signed by Argentine researcher Héctor Schmucler (1979, pp. 3-8), which presents a

little better the historical context in which the book was produced and its purpose, made explicit almost at the end, when he stated that such text:

is defined as a *clearly political* instrument [emphasis added], which denounces the cultural colonization common to all Latin American countries. Hence its partial and controversial tone, the passionate discussion that runs through its pages, its declared vocation to be useful that makes it disregard scholar preciousness.<sup>7</sup> (p. 7)

The notion that the book was controversial was anticipated by the authors themselves, who write a topic entitled *Instructions on how to expel someone from the Disneyland club*, with the arguments to be used personally against them: both would be “indecent and immoral”, “hyper-complicated and hyper-sophisticated,” “members of a sinister elite,” etc. (Mattelart & Dorfman, 1971/2002, p. 18). Somehow, the prophecy came true: the first edition of the book was banned from the United States, accused by Disney companies’ lawyers of copyright infringement (Abrahão Júnior, 2016, pp. 432-433) and, years later, Mattelart himself mocked: “we even had the privilege of being censored by the United States government”<sup>8</sup> (Reale & Mangone, 1996, p. 12). However, currently, the American version of the book (*How to read Donald Duck: Imperialist ideology in the Disney comic*) by David Kunzle’s translation and long and excellent contextual and analytical introduction produced in 1991, is easily found on online bookstore sites like Amazon<sup>9</sup> – a very different situation from when the work was published in English for the first time: printed in England in 1975 by the International General – “an eccentric, one-man, Paris-based publishing firm”, according to Kunzle (2012, parag. 2) -, whose first batch ended up having only a small part marketed in the United States, with 1,500 copies (Assis, 2017).

In an interview, Mattelart (Reale & Mangone, 1996) talks about the emergence of the book; it is worth transcribing part of his statement in full.

“Regarding the genealogy of this ‘little book’, I can tell you that it was made in response to a request from the workers, from the typographic workers of

<sup>7</sup> In the original: “se define como un instrumento claramente político que denuncia la colonización cultural común a todos los países latinoamericanos. De allí su tono parcial y polémico, la discusión apasionada que recorre sus páginas, su declarada vocación de ser útil que le hace prescindir de preciosismos eruditos”.

<sup>8</sup> In the original: “Hasta hemos tenido el privilegio de ser censurados por el gobierno de Estados Unidos”.

<sup>9</sup> Its fourth edition is recent: 2018.

# D

## To read Mattelart/Dorfman, 50 years later

the Chilean government printing company that published large quantities of magazines and newspapers. This state printing press, which the Popular Unity government had inherited from the previous Christian Democratic government, had to continue to publish comics – as a result of an agreement between both parties – and this continuity was part of the pact of constitutional guarantees. During those years there was such a mobilization of the Right against Popular Unity that it was even reflected in the comics. Then the workers came looking for us saying: ‘It’s very curious, we continue to print magazines that slap us in the face; we are interested in knowing what is behind all this.’ And we got to work with them. We began to held workshops – and not only about Walt Disney – that tried to encourage a reflection on these products that were, definitely, against them. This already implied an awareness-raising process. Moreover, there were the high school students who have done the same route. Our first concern was not to produce a book but to discuss with them in workshops the many questions raised as to this type of cultural products. The interesting thing is the reason why it has been so successful in Latin America: it is a text that starts from things that people know and teaches them other notions, it teaches them to read texts in a different manner based on certain issues that they already know.”<sup>10</sup> (pp. 13-14)

Right after that, Mattelart explains why they focused on Disney universe.

“Secondly, we had taken Walt Disney as the symbol of a culture, a way of life and a conception of the world. It was a product that symbolized a model of society that we rejected. The biggest problem for us was how to think, write and read without Donald Duck. The question of cultural dependency, the problem of uneven flows, it was fundamental at that time. Today’s world is different,

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<sup>10</sup> In the original: “En cuanto a la genealogía de este ‘librito’ puedo decirle que fue hecho en respuesta a un pedido de los obreros, de los trabajadores tipográficos de la imprenta gubernamental chilena que publicaba grandes cantidades de revistas y periódicos. Esta imprenta estatal, que el gobierno de Unidad Popular había heredado del gobierno anterior Demócrata Cristiano, tenía que seguir publicando historietas – a raíz de un acuerdo que hubo entre los dos partidos – y esta continuidad formaba parte del pacto de garantías constitucionales. Por esos años hubo una movilización tal de la derecha contra la Unidad Popular que se reflejaba hasta en las historietas. Entonces, los obreros vinieron a buscarnos diciendo: ‘Es muy curioso, seguimos imprimiendo revistas que nos dan cachetazos; nos interesaría saber que hay detrás de todo esto’. Y nos pusimos a trabajar con ellos. Habíamos comenzado a hacer talleres – y no solamente sobre Walt Disney – que intentaban propiciar una reflexión sobre estos productos que estaban, en definitiva, contra ellos. Esto implicaba ya un proceso de toma de conciencia. Por otra parte, estaban los estudiantes secundarios que habían hecho el mismo recorrido. Nuestra primera preocupación no fue sacar un libro sino discutir con ellos en talleres en torno de las muchas preguntas que se hacían sobre este tipo de productos culturales. Lo interesante es la razón por la que ha tenido tanto éxito en América Latina: es un texto que parte de cosas que la gente conoce y les enseña otras nociones, les enseña a leer textos de una manera diferente a partir de ciertas cuestiones que ya conocen”.

Walt Disney seems innocuous in the face of the advance of the globalization of communication systems.”<sup>11</sup> (p. 14)

Thus, it is clear that *Para Leer al Pato Donald* was not a work intended to the academic world, but, at least and apparently at first, to a particular target audience: Chilean workers and high school students of that period. In parallel, the book is part of logic of debate on central themes in those days, such as cultural dependency. It is from a better contextualization of this circumstance book that we can understand some gaps in the work. One of them is the absence of traditional central elements (the scholar preciousness cited by Schmucler) in an academic piece of research: presentation of the object, bibliographic review or explicit theoretical and methodological framework. In doing so, the book becomes a great analysis whose theoretical-methodological foundations are never previously anticipated or debated, and this is far from becoming a problem, if we take Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1957) as an example, whose *inverted* structural logic favors the presentation of the analyzed cases to bring its theoretical-semiological foundations only later. Interestingly, Mattelart says he was influenced precisely by Barthes’ book when he began to analyze *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), by Thomas Robert Malthus: “My entry into the analysis of communication ideology has begun as an analysis [of Malthus’ work], greatly influenced by Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies*”<sup>12</sup> (Mattelart & S necal, 2008, p. 10).

Nevertheless, if we want to add one more extratextual ingredient, it is also necessary to take into account Mattelart’s own cultural background. In another interview, he remembers the shock felt when he arrived in Latin America.

“You know, when I arrived in Chile in 1962, I had a European cultural formation. That is, I wasn’t accustomed to watching American TV series, or to cinemas occupied by American films. And when I arrived in Chile, it was a different reality. In Europe we had been protected from this aspect of American cultural imperialism – American mass culture. However, Chile, in the area of mass culture commodities, was a country that depended highly on American products. For example, I had children in Chile, and every Sunday afternoon [on the

<sup>11</sup> In the original: “En segundo lugar, nosotros hab amos tomado a Walt Disney como el s mbolo de una cultura, de un modo de vida y de una concepci n del mundo. Era un producto que simbolizaba un modelo de sociedad que rechaz bamos. El problema mayor para nosotros era c mo pensar, escribir y leer sin el Pato Donald. En ese momento era fundamental la cuesti n de la dependencia cultural, el problema de los flujos desiguales. Hoy el mundo es otro, Walt Disney parece inocuo frente al avance de la globalizaci n de los sistemas de comunicaci n.”

<sup>12</sup> In the original: “Mon entr e dans l’analyse de l’id ologie de la communication a commenc  par l’analyse, tr s influenc e par les *Mythologies* de Roland Barthes”.

TV] it was Disneyland [Disney productions with Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, etc.]. That was inconceivable in Europe, which had culture industries that represented a reality different from the Latin American one (though with very little creativity).<sup>13</sup> I think that's very important. Why is it important? It's important because soon the concept of cultural imperialism becomes isolated (specific) to the terrain from which it was created [that is, it was conceived by American scholars and came to apply to US cultural domination].” (Hay et al., 2013, p. 2)

In short, *Para Leer al Pato Donald* is the result not only of a specific historical and political context and project: it is also the mixture of a text with Barthian nuances (among other influences), and the product of a cultural shock suffered by a European researcher.<sup>14</sup> None of this, however, prevents the book from being considered a classic among Latin American productions on mass communication (even though Mattelart is Belgian). Let us point out two examples that show its strength. The first one is given to us by Christa Berger (2001), when discussing communication research in Latin America, when she lists the five most important authors of the continent from a survey made in 1992 by Gómez Palácios (Mattelart and his research group; Antonio Pasquali; Luis Ramiro Beltrán; Eliseo Verón, and Paulo Freire) (p. 252). Posteriorly, she suggests that the continent research focuses on two thematic areas: 1) study of the media power structure – transnational and national – and capitalist countries' domination strategies; 2) study on the discursive formations and the messages of mass culture from their structures of meaning (p. 258). Berger states that the empirical material of these analyzes consists of conjunctural analyzes, but which highlight more “the global unity of domination, emphasizing the *homogeneity* [emphasis added] of the forms of power than the *specificities* [emphasis added] that the empirical material could provide, favoring *generalist* interpretations [emphasis added]” (p. 259). Finally, Berger points to Dorfman and Mattelart's work, as well as to the book *Mass Communications and American Empire*, by Herbert Schiller, as examples of these two thematic perspectives.

<sup>13</sup> This seems to imply that, within this *European cultural formation*, Mattelart was not interested in (or did not like), for example, comics produced in Belgium, a country that ended up helping in the creation both of a specific model of comic production (school Franco-Belgian and its famous *ligne claire* style – clear line – adopted by comic artists like Hergé and Moebius) and of characters as Tintin (Hergé), Lucky Luke (Morris) and the Smurfs (Peyo). We searched for some possible reference to Mattelart's specific relationship with Belgian or European comics, but we found nothing about it, even though the work *Tintin in Tibet* is quickly quoted (and criticized) in the book *Para Leer al Pato Donald* (1971/1979, p. 59).

<sup>14</sup> How is it possible not to remember the same shock felt by Adorno when he arrived in the United States in 1938? Curiously, Dorfman lived in France and in the United States.



The other example is extracted from Cáceres et al. (2005), when they list 100 books for a *possible communicology*. *Para Leer al Pato Donald* appears among these books, whose macro-object is the means of dissemination, and specific object is “ideology” (p. 357). The book is considered fundamental because it is, in theoretical and conceptual terms, a classic in the theoretical frameworks that analyze the media content from a critical perspective; and for being, in terms of social importance, one of the most popular in the literature of Communication students, due to its more than 30 editions (in Mexico), and one of the anthological texts that confirm a tradition of recurring thoughts in Latin America and in the treatment of the relations contained between means, structure and power (pp. 358-359).

All the aspects previously listed are present in *Para Leer al Pato Donald*; thus, in the end, the book seems to indicate that Disney comics are a means to defend a central thesis, namely, that of maintaining the American imperialism hegemony, through diffusion of certain ideological values. As Mattelart and Dorfman (1971/2002) write, the attack is not so much on the American way of life itself, but on the American dream of life, on “the manner in which the U.S. dreams and redeems itself, and then imposes that dream upon others for its own salvation [...]” (p. 127). From this point of view, the work fulfills its role. However, it has not been immune to criticism throughout this time. If, for some, the work is a classic due to its critical perspective, for others it fails in several aspects. The lack of methodological rigor of the book is assessed, for example, by Maldonado (1999), in an article on the Belgian researcher’s thought. Commenting on Mattelart’s analyzes in the book, the author states that

they are structured through basic applications of French structural-semiology. I consider this to be the weakest point of the author’s methodological work, because the semiological paradigm was approached without due attention, producing schematic texts such as the highly commented *Para Leer al Pato Donald*, which synthesizes a mechanistic way of conceiving the relationships between messages, receivers and context. Donald Duck in this text is an omniscient and omnipotent “imperialist agent” who manipulates the simple consciences of audiences in dominated countries. (p. 11)

In addition, and this also seems to be a problem, there is the impression (although not in-fact explicit) that comics, *in general*, seem to be confused with American imperialism, to the point that there is no possibility of *salvation* for them. Hegemony is analyzed through comics, as it could be analyzed

through cartoons or cinema, as if there were no significant differences regarding the means used, the forms of production, circulation and reception or the semiotic systems mobilized, once that any of them, for being North American,<sup>15</sup> would be submitted to the logic of cultural industrial production. Thus, comics served only as a pretext for ideological analysis.

It is worth remembering that comics, until then, were not yet an object of academic study. Vergueiro and Santos (2014), when conducting a survey on the communication perspective in relation to comics, observe that, in a moment “marked by the intensification of the Cold War, theorists accused the stories, as well as other massive products, of [being] ideological fulcra of cultural imperialism.” (p. 270). Thus, comics tended to be seen both as *superficial* (for being *popular and frivolous*, according to American functionalist thinking) and as *ideological* (for being *carriers of hidden meanings*, according to Frankfurt’s critical thinking), in analyzes that mainly took into account its contents. Who supports this thought is Muanis (2018):

between the 1950s and 1970s, it was the moment when this obsession [of the fear of media influence on young people] reached its peak in comics, with works by both right-wing conservatives such as Frederic Wertham, which flooded the United States in a moralistic wave against comics, and neo-Marxists, such as Manuel Jofré, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart. They only saw comics in an apocalyptic manner, a subliterate that provoked resignation and submission to the capitalist *status quo*, which alienated young people. (p. 156)

If comics were in the middle of this crossroads, Disney productions had a prominent place:

The ultimate symbol of this ideological content in which the young man found himself at the mercy of an engineered advertising strategy, for these authors, was Walt Disney comics. Therefore, in the course of the 20th century, there was a process of marginalization of the comic media, in contrast, especially, with what was considered part of the hegemonic media of high culture, such as literature, music, painting and even cinema. (p. 156)

Some initial specific considerations would be necessary, such as the studies carried out by Umberto Eco (*Apocalittici e Integrati*, 1964, Italy),

<sup>15</sup> We think here of the underground comic artists that emerged in the 1960s (Robert Crumb, Harvey Pekar, Trina Robbins) or even the satirical magazine MAD, which emerged in 1952, as North American examples that escape this logic.

or by Jacques Marny (*Le Monde Étonnant des Bandes Dessinées*, 1968, France), or the views of Marshall McLuhan (*Understanding Media*, 1964, Canada) so that comics could also be analyzed in terms of form, as a form of expression, a significant system and/or an object of reading and reception – which is a far cry from Mattelart and Dorfman's pretensions.

### OBJECT OF THE OBJECT?

If the specific object of *Para Leer al Pato Donald* is, as previously seen, ideology, what is the space for comics per se? How are they perceived by the two authors? We know that such questions seem unnecessary, since Dorfman and Mattelart's analysis focus is specifically on the plane of the superstructure, rather than on the substructure; however, as much as the focus is ideology, an analysis that does not take into account such aspects, among others, seems incomplete. An example of this is the work *The carnival of images: Brazilian television fiction*, by Armand and Michèle Mattelart, originally published in 1987, which analyzes the production of Brazilian soap operas by *Rede Globo*: in this work, there are discussions about the role of melodrama in Latin America, as well as a certain incursion into the *television field*, with descriptions of technical procedures and interviews with audiovisual directors. In this publication, there is methodologically much of what is missing in *Para Leer al Pato Donald*.

Why do we dwell upon some of the aspects that were left out, if the intention was precisely the publication of a pamphlet? An issue (false for some, perhaps) is not that the book is self-declared pamphlet, but that it is read as if *it were not* a pamphlet. This, we must recognize, is not the authors' fault but, to a certain extent, of the work academic reception; here, obviously, another study would be needed to analyze the reception, the horizon of expectations, the editorial paratexts and the criticism that surrounded the work when it was published and in the following years, which saw in the book much more than a pamphlet and, at the same time, did not notice (or did not want to notice) any methodological gaps as scientific work.

In an interview, Mattelart comments that:

In general, it is said that [the book] was something of the moment, that it analyzed the structure and not the reception. I rebel against these attacks and interpretations. Even though it is correct. . . that this book does not wonder about how an Argentine, Chilean or French child reads Walt Disney, I must say that it is a work that had already internalized the issue of reception. During

this period, the main issue was not so much consumption, but the production of an alternative.<sup>16</sup> (Reale & Mangone, 1996, pp. 12-13)

This alternative occurs in February 1971, when Allende's government acquires 40% of the assets of the Zig-Zag publishing house and nationalizes it, transforming it into the Quimantú publishing house.<sup>17</sup> Zig-Zag becomes a private entity, a client of Quimantú in this process, and continues to publish Disney titles in Chile, among others. As for Quimantú, two titles stand out: *La Firme: Revista de Educación Popular* (aligned with the ideals of Popular Unity) and *Cabro Chico: Una Revista para el Niño de Hoy* (which was trying to stop youth alienation) (Gomes, 2011). The idea was to encourage popular participation in the direction of each comic produced by the publishing house, with Manuel Jofré and sociologist Mario Salazar integrating a Comics Coordination and Evaluation Team in workshops on their use with popular movements (Yglesias, 1985, p. 168), even if the foreign material that contained “negative,” “offensive or disturbing” connotations was edited by Quimantú (Gomes, 2011). With the overthrow of Allende in 1973, Quimantú is replaced by *Editorial Nacional Gabriela Mistral*, and several of its publications are burned by Pinochet's government.

From here, some gaps in the work of Mattelart and Dorfman will be listed. We make it clear that our goal is to point out issues that could lead authors, if not to change the theoretical conclusions of their research, at least to have a better idea of the *object of the object* of their analysis within the book: the comics. Thus, we focus on three aspects: decentralization of Disney production; translation issues; and the lack of information about comics in Chile.

## DECENTRALIZED PRODUCTION

To begin, presenting a central point is necessary: Walt Disney was never responsible for all the material production of comics, as a naive interpretation of *Para Leer al Pato Donald* could imply, as if Disney personally controlled all the means of production of material goods and produced alone everything

<sup>16</sup> In the original: “En general, se dice que [el libro] era algo del momento, que se analizaba la estructura y no la recepción. Contra esos ataques, contra esas interpretaciones, me rebelo. Si bien es cierto . . . que este libro no se pregunta cómo un niño argentino, chileno, o francés lee a Walt Disney, debo decir que es un trabajo que ya había interiorizado la cuestión de la recepción. En este período, la cuestión principal no era tanto el consumo sino la producción de una alternativa”.

<sup>17</sup> The word *Quimantú* means “Sunshine of Knowledge” in Mapuche, according to Gomes (2011). *Mapuche*, or *mapudungun*, is the designation of both the language and the Amerindian people who inhabit certain regions of Chile and Argentina.

that takes his name. On the contrary: according to Santos (2002), Disney's participation was reduced, as he "licensed the production of comics with his characters, allowing several artists, such as Carl Barks or Romano Scarpa, to create or adapt characters and plots to his personal conception world, sometimes *conflicting* [emphasis added] with the principles defended by Disney" (p. 83). In other words: there was a certain individual freedom in the design of stories signed with Disney name; what did not exist was the possibility for designers and screenwriters to receive credit for the stories they worked on (p. 145). That is: effectively, Walt Disney represented more a *brand* than a *name* (and, of course, it also represented an ideology). Besides, Disney was much more interested in film production<sup>18</sup> and animation than in comics (p. 83). Thus, Mattelart and Dorfman are unable (obviously, for reasons of focus) to perceive Walt Disney's own company as a space of contradictions in the political-social sphere.

It is also important to remember that Disney comic book production has been decentralized for decades; thus, countries like Italy, Denmark, France and Brazil are producers of Disney stories, creating and exporting them (Santos, 2002, pp. 230-239), including even before Dorfman and Mattelart's study. The case of Italy deserves particular attention: in that country, since the early 1930s, stories were produced without authorization from Disney studios, reaching the point where there were pirate stories, made by Guglielmo Guastaveglia, involving Mickey and the cat Felix (which *is not* a Disney character, but a creation by Otto Messmer and/or Pat Sullivan,<sup>19</sup> whose strips were distributed internationally by King Features Syndicate); at the end of the 1930s, with the ban on the import of American films and comics (a decision made by Benito Mussolini), Italian Disney comics began to be produced officially in that country thanks to a request from Argentine artist Federico Pedrocchi (resident in Italy) to the parent company (Santos, 2002, pp. 239-250).

In addition, within the United States there were creators who, even not being possible to sign the works, had authorial freedom to make the stories in their own style. Among them, it is interesting to mention particularly the comic book artist Carl Barks, creator of Scrooge McDuck. Barks immortalized, between 1947 and 1966, stories of Disney ducks (Scrooge McDuck, Donald,

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<sup>18</sup> An episode that illustrates this: Winkin (1984, p. 70) comments that Walt Disney even suggested that the American researcher Ray Birdwhistell (at the time, relatively famous for his studies on kinesics and gestures and for the 1952 book *Introduction to Kinesics*) should abandon the university and settle in Hollywood to improve the techniques of representing gestures in cartoons.

<sup>19</sup> To this day there is a legal dispute as to which of the two authors created Felix.

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Huey, Dewey and Louie) in exotic, distant and (often) underdeveloped countries and locations, in addition to adventures in outer space. What seems to have escaped Mattelart and Dorfman is the fact that Barks was an American conservative (as Walt Disney), born in an Oregon farm in 1901, who illustrated his stories with photographs from National Geographic magazines. Abrahão Júnior, from the analysis of the book by the American researcher Thomas Andrae (*Carl Barks and the Disney Comic Book: Unmasking the Myth of Modernity*, 2006), recalls that several stories by Barks “consistently satirize the homogenization and eradication of traditional societies by the consumerist and exploitative culture of the USA. In this sense, the author [Andrae] frames Barks’ self-proclaimed conservatism as a *romantic nostalgia and refusal of modernity*” (Abrahão Júnior, 2016, p. 437). Later, Abrahão Júnior (2016) adds:

The modernity that repulses Barks would be the result of a fragmentation of the community and the loss of tradition. The cultural impact of capitalist modernity can be seen in terms of loss, rather than an imposition. From this perspective, for Andrae, the expansion process of capitalist modernity involves not an invasion of “weak” cultures by “strong” cultures, as in the hypothesis of cultural imperialism, but almost the opposite: the expansion of the West’s cultural decay over the rest of the world. (p. 437)

Then, what we would have, at least in the world created by Barks, is not a Disney universe totally molded in an ode to capitalism and imperialism, but a universe dedicated to the criticism of modernity and all its symbols (the metropolis, technology, modern art), in favor of a conservative worldview.

Santos (2002) also reiterates this conservative view of the comic. According to the author, “Barks transmitted, in his stories, his personal view of the role of money, wealth, in contemporary society, in the same way that he cast his critical eye on politicians and also exposed his political and ideological position” (p. 180). Further on, Santos recalls that another object of Barks’ distrust was the technological modernization of society, which symbolized the danger of massification and the loss of traditional values that could arise from the indiscriminate dissemination of new technologies (p. 187). Moreover, Santos recalls that Barks did not like the way Disney pressed his employees, waiting for “miracles from their writers” (p. 171).

It should be noted: several researchers consider that Walt Disney’s real alter ego would, in fact, be one of his creations, Mickey Mouse (also a rural and naive being), mainly in the animations and the first daily strips. In these initial productions, although there is no “evidence of pride or villainy. . .

the character's determination and his need to obtain notoriety reveal a different face from the protagonist – and, by extension, from Disney – who demonstrates, behind the rural naiveness, an attachment to power” (Santos, 2002, p. 94). In addition to these Mickey's characteristics, there are optimism, intelligence, leadership spirit and purity, still according to Santos, despite some changes in his personality over time, particularly when the character is transported to the urban environment, where the facet of the “combatant of evil” and “restorer of order” detective stands out (Santos, 2002, p. 98).

Thus, who would the *famous* Donald Duck represent? Several researchers effectively associate Donald (a character created by Al Taliaferro in 1934) with Carl Barks, and not with Walt Disney, as Schilling Jr. (2014, as mentioned in Abrahão Júnior, 2016), and Kunzle (2012), although, on several occasions, Santos (2002) points out that the nostalgia felt by Scrooge McDuck in relation to his past is the same as that of Barks himself. And also, even though he was not actually Donald's creator, it was Barks who leveraged the personality initially developed by Taliaferro: an anarchic duck who did not like to work (a kind of counterpoint to Mickey Mouse). Abrahão Júnior (2016), mentioning the American journalist Peter Schilling Jr.'s work, entitled *Carl Barks' Duck: Average American* (2015), says the author considers Donald,

Undoubtedly, Barks' great character. For the journalist, Donald would be an “actor” who plays the most different characters, having as a single constant the presence of the three nephews. In addition to this unusual aspect of Donald Duck's interpretation, the book also suggests an important clue for understanding the longevity of Barks' work: verisimilitude with Barks' own biography. The character resembles the artist both from the construction of personality nuances and from the discontinuity of Donald's actions and professions. At thirty-four years of age, Barks still made a living from casual work. Drawing was a leisure activity until he was hired as an animator at Disney Studios. (p. 438)

In turn, Kunzle (2012), when was writing the introduction to the North American version of Mattelart and Dorfman's work, interviewed Barks, exposing his impressions and opinions about the comic artist:

“I liked Barks, marvelled at the way he had quietly repressed his anger at Disney, and became entirely sympathetic to him. I incorporated into my Introduction a very favourable estimate of his work, which really is aesthetically superior to all other children's comics of its time, and reveals – to me at any rate – a very significant ambivalence towards the Disney-capitalist ideology of which

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he is both victim and critic. I established the artist as example of economic exploitation more typical of industrial than cultural workers, as we normally understand the terms. The immensely industrious and conscientious Barks, the slave to his drawing-board, enriching the bosses with his labors, was exploited by ruthless Uncle Walt Disney like Donald Duck is exploited by the tyrannical capitalist miser Uncle Scrooge McDuck. I saw Barks projecting his self-portrait, and that of the oppressed bourgeoisie, into poor, frantic, neurotic Donald, and this in itself as an act of unconscious rebellion, from which intelligent children might learn to despise capitalist ethics, as Barks truly despises Disney and the avarice of the system which seeks to grind him down.” (parag. 6)

It can be seen here that, according to Schilling Jr.’s and Kunzle’s views – the latter, according to what he writes, “moving gradually and hesitantly out of bourgeois ideology towards Marxism.” (Kunzle, 2012, parag. 1) – other elements are added. On the one hand, a potential complexity in Donald’s personality – combined, we remember, with the fact that Disney stories can be developed in different countries –; on the other, the possibility of a multifaceted, plural interpretation of Disney comics. If, for Mattelart and Dorfman, Disney characters are one-dimensional and there would be no other possible type of reading for their object of study, for Schilling Jr. and Kunzle, respectively, it would be possible to both think of some Disney characters as complex and subvert the interpretation of these texts. Kunzle (2012), in a line to a certain extent similar to that advocated by Schilling Jr., claims that

“[I saw] many of Barks’ best stories not as *justifications* of imperialist adventure, like the Chinese did, but as satires upon it, in which the imperialist Duckburgers<sup>20</sup> come off looking as foolish as –and far meaner than – the innocent Third World natives.” (parag. 6)

Finally, and still in relation to Barks, we believe it is important to highlight an aspect to which he draws attention: Uncle Scrooge would not be the synthesis of capitalism, but a potential factor of its destruction. Sarmiento (2013) calls attention to this fact, from an interview by Charles Bergquist with Carl Barks:

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<sup>20</sup> *Duckburg* is the city where Disney duck characters live; the characters that gravitate around Mickey live in *Mouseton*. Interestingly, in Brazil, everyone lives in the same city, *Patópolis* (Santos, 2002, p. 119).



BERGQUIST: Scrooge is often accused of being the arch-capitalist. Do you agree with that?

BARKS: No, he is a complete enemy of the capitalist system. He would destroy it in one year's time; there would no longer be any capitalism or free enterprise. He would freeze all the stuff that keeps capitalism going – that is, the spending money. The faster money is spent, the more prosperity everybody has. Scrooge never spends anything, so everybody would progressively grow poorer as he accumulated more of their money, and in time nobody would have any money but him. That would be the end of capitalism”. (p. 139)

Santos (2002) partially reiterates this view of Scrooge McDuck as the antithesis of the capitalist, by classifying him as a hyperbole: “The ‘richest duck in the world’ elevates the stereotype of the *stingy Scot* to a maximum degree [emphasis added]. . . . Unlike the true capitalist, who profits by putting money in circulation, Scrooge McDuck only accumulates wealth ”(pp. 122-123). That is: from this perspective, capitalism would be doomed to an end in the Disney universe due to Scrooge McDuck, the ultimate symbol of Scottish cupidity, and not to the proletariat...

## THE TRANSLATION ISSUE

One element that was probably left out of Mattelart and Dorfman's analysis was the (eternal) issue of translating verbal texts (dialogue and thought balloons, and captions) – in this case, from texts in English into Spanish. A literal translation of any original text is impossible, since such text is trapped in the culture in which it was produced and also in the image of the model reader for which it was designed; then, the translator has the task of creating from original raw material, thinking of the new readers, although there are other issues that go beyond the purpose of this article.<sup>21</sup> But, as we have already seen, Quimantú publishing house also changed texts considered negative.

<sup>21</sup> It should be remembered that comic books, as a semiotic system that articulates different forms of language (verbal texts, images, page design, colors) are subject to interventions in their elements, and not just in the verbal text. As an example, we cite here the stories entitled *Storia e gloria della dinastia dei paperi* (History and glory of the Duck Dynasty), created by the Italian screenwriter Guido Martina and produced by the Italian Disney in 1970. The eight episodes of the saga were published in Brazil originally from 1974, with a series of interventions by the censorship, which ordered the elimination of expressions, texts, drawings, and even complete pages. Only in 2009 Brazilian readers had access to the unpublished material, without the intervention of censorship, with the publication, by *Editora Abril*, of two volumes with the complete saga.

Who points to the problem of translation in the book is Kunzle, in his introduction to *How to Read Donald Duck*, in two very different situations. Kunzle (1991) explains that he chose to use the versions of Disney stories translated into Spanish in Chile, and not the originals, which implies some problems, as we will see. The first situation proposed by Kunzle (1991, p. 16) concerns the story “Lost in the Andes” (1949), in which Donald and his nephews stand before the head of an Andean civilization in which chickens, eggs and other beings and objects are square shaped; at one point, Donald asks that chief for a compass, and he replies that he will give it on the condition that they, ducks, teach something useful to his people. In the same vignette, Donald’s nephews reply, according to the Chilean text: “Les enseñaremos a cuadrarse ante sus gobernantes” (“we will teach you to bow before the government,” according to the Brazilian translation of the book) (Dorfman & Mattelart, 2002, p. 28), but the verb *cuadrarse* is dubious,<sup>22</sup> which shows both the potential and the difficulties of translation, depending on the language. However, Kunzle (1991) warns that the original text, in English, speaks of *square dancing*<sup>23</sup> (something equivalent to Brazilian *quadrilha* [sort of dance in pairs], and which maintains the original notion of *squareness* in the expression<sup>24</sup>) – this option is also accepted by the Brazilian translator Érico Assis (2017), who proposes the probable option of the Chilean translation:

And, before my class [of translators] was put on the fire: the anonymous Chilean translator probably used “*cuadrarse ante sus gobernantes*” because it was the first solution that came to his mind to keep the theme of the squares that crosses the comics (refer to “*square dancing*”). Not because he wanted to ground Marxist theories. By the way, in the last translation of “Lost in the Andes” in Brazil, by Marcelo Alencar, the nephews say: “Does the Chick song serve?” And start singing: “The square chick/Fits here in my hand...” (Assis, 2017, parag. 9)

<sup>22</sup> The pronominal verb *Cuadrarse* in Spanish can mean both *to stand to attention* (in front of the flag, for example) or *placing oneself firmly or seriously, without bending to the other*.

<sup>23</sup> In the translation to English made by Kunzle (1991, p. 54), from the text in Spanish, we find the statement “We will teach them to stand to attention before their superiors,” followed by a footnote mark that takes the reader to the introduction made by him. In the English version of the story, the statement is “we’ll teach’em square dancing,” with a graphic highlight for the word *square* (Barks, 2011, p. 31).

<sup>24</sup> In the Italian edition of the work (Dorfman & Mattelart, 1972, p. 29), we find the maintenance of the idea of *squareness* in the translation for that country: *sì, a inquadarsi davanti ai governanti*.

The second situation (now, ideologically inverted) pointed out by Kunzle (1991, pp. 13-14) occurs after Allende's fall: with the rise of General Augusto Pinochet, the American researcher is faced with an example of distorted translation in a story available in the publication *Chile Monitor* (1974), which brings a set of pictures where the character Jiminy Cricket sees some kittens being attacked by two birds of prey – named *Marx* and *Hegel*; he takes a shotgun, shoots at the birds and “says”: “Ha! Firearms are the only thing these bloody birds are afraid of”<sup>25</sup> (Kunzle, 1991, p. 13). According to Kunzle, the 1973 counter-revolution caused certain aberrations (such as this flagrant anti-Marxism) in Chilean translations, “which was an embarrassment for Disney HQ” (p. 16).

### ¿HAY HISTORIETAS EN CHILE?

Another important aspect, which is outside Mattelart and Dorfman's analysis, is the perception of the field of Chilean comics. From the isolated reading of *Para Leer al Pato Donald*, the remaining impression is that there were neither comic artists, nor local comics, nor other foreign comics (Latin American or not), as if the Disney production did not present itself in a universe of competition with other titles, foreign or local. Gomes (2011) recalls, for example, that it is the “second half of the 1960s<sup>26</sup> [which] presents an ‘invasion’ of foreign comics linked to Walt Disney's characters” (p. 11).

The reality of Chilean comics was quite diverse. The 1986 eighty issue of the Chilean *Ceneca* (*Centro de Indagación y Expresión Cultural y Artística*) academic journal addressed the theme *Publicaciones Infantiles y revistas de Historietas en Chile: 1895-1973* (Children's Publications and Comic Books in Chile: 1895-1973) and brought a work that was part of an investigation called *The Making of Chilean Culture: Literature, Arts and Media*, conducted by Manuel Jofré with the support from Canada's Social Science and Humanities Research Council.<sup>27</sup> In this publication, the history of comics in Chile is organized according to three distinct periods: 1) 1895-1937 (or prehistory of comics in Chile, which started with *La Revista Cómica*, a weekly newspaper,

<sup>25</sup> In the original: “Eh! A las armas de fuego es a lo único que le temen estos pajarracos.” The noun *pajarracos* can be either a big and ugly bird or a cunning person, who wants to deceive or has bad intentions.

<sup>26</sup> More specifically: 1962.

<sup>27</sup> The research was also affiliated with the Chile Project, from the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (Cerlac), from York University, Downsview, Ontario, Canada, and also with two Chilean institutions, the *Centro de Expresión and Indagación Cultural y Artística* (Cenega), from Santiago, and the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales* (Flacso), also from Santiago.

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with humorous vignettes designed by Luis Fernando Rojas, publication owner and founder, in 1895, in Santiago), focused on the origin and constitution of the genre<sup>28</sup> and its autonomy as a means; 2) 1938-1970, referring to the growth and establishment of comics in Chilean society, theorized about them, their mechanisms of reproduction of ideology and the characteristic process of decoding that they propose to the reader (identification with the hero); and, finally, 3) 1971-1973, which refer to the creation and problematization of comics, their use as an educational element, reaching a high degree of knowledge and elaboration. That is: there is a history of comic book production and circulation in Chile, which is marginalized by Mattelart and Dorfman. We reiterate: this was not the focus of their work, but it ended up obscuring local production (and comics in general), blurring the boundaries between comics which were *imperialist, subliterate and exponent of the Ninth Art*.

But there are famous titles produced in Chile. Gomes (2011) highlights, for example, that in the years 1950-1960 there was the

so-called “golden age” for Chilean comics, where we see the consolidation, alongside American comics, of Chilean characters today considered true classics of the genre in the country such as *Pepe Antártico*, by Percy, and *Condorito*, by Pepo<sup>29</sup> among others (p. 9)

Another text that points to the diverse possibilities of comics as a significant practice, with a more semiotic-cultural look, is that proposed by researcher María Pérez Yglesias (1985). With a good historical and bibliographical reference on comics and influenced by the thought of the French *Tel Quel* magazine (in particular, by Bulgarian researcher Julia Kristeva), the author defends a semiotic (intertextual) look for comics:

Assuming a means of producing meaning as a significant practice, as text (productivity and intertextuality) is not to accept rigid classifications, strict differentiation. It means assuming each of the comic books, the so-called “strips” or the commented cartoons, as a production and not as a finished product, ready

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<sup>28</sup> Particularly, we consider comics not as a genre, but as a hypergenre, within the notion suggested by Dominique Maingueneau (2010, pp. 129-138) and assumed in Brazil, for example, also by the comic book researcher Paulo Ramos (2009, pp. 17-20). The hypergenre allows serving as a structure for different textual genres: fiction stories, journalistic and/or historical reports, biographies, manuals, institutional publications. For us, talking about comics *as a genre* is like talking about cinema *as a genre*: it makes no sense.

<sup>29</sup> *Pepe Antártico* appeared in 1947; *Condorito*, in 1949. This character was even distributed in Latin America, the United States and Europe.

for exchange. . . . It is to accept that every text is intertextuality (a dialogue of texts of various types, previous or synchronous) and that, as a particular text, it is part of the general text of history and culture.<sup>30</sup> (Yglesias, 1985, p. 160)

In a second step, the author dwells on comic experiences in various regions of the world (Soviet Union, Algeria, Philippines, China) until reaching Latin America and, among other countries, Chile. When referring to Latin America, and due to the adopted theoretical perspective, Yglésias (1985) considers that

Latin America, one of the most important markets for the sale of consumer goods of North American comics, has a very wide indigenous production, especially if we consider texts that are worked “in the image and likeness” of traditional comics (reproducing the dominant ideology) alongside another that is built as an affirmation of the national and critical of the imposition.<sup>31</sup> (p. 166)

Unlike Dorfman and Mattelart, Yglesias (1985) analyzes the conditions of comics production in Chile and, among some of the conclusions of her research, proposes that comics, even considered some of the most important means of standardization and reproduction of ideology in the service of capitalist system, are a hybrid that never allowed total submission to traditional discourses, which would make them concomitantly edifying and at times “dangerous” (p. 188). In other words: if she points to the ideological role of comics, she also sees possibilities for different readings and collective production, such as that which occurred in Quimantú.

## CONCLUSION

At the end of this brief journey, we can comment on the work *Para Leer al Pato Donald*. As we have said throughout this text, it was not our intention to propose (again) a discussion on the validity or not of Mattelart

<sup>30</sup> In the original: “Asumir un medio de producción de sentido como práctica significante, como texto (productividad e intertextualidad) es no aceptar las clasificaciones rígidas, la diferenciación estricta. Es asumir cada una de las revistas, los llamados ‘strips’ o las caricaturas comentadas como una producción y no como un producto hecho, listo para el intercambio. . . . Es aceptar que todo texto es una intertextualidad (un diálogo de textos de diversa índole, anteriores o sincrónicos) y que, como texto particular forma parte del texto general de la historia y de la cultura”.

<sup>31</sup> In the original: “[La] América Latina, uno de los mercados más importantes para la venta de consumo de la historieta norteamericana, presenta una *producción autóctona* bastante amplia, sobre todo si se toman en cuenta los textos que se trabajan ‘a imagen y semejanza’ de la historieta tradicional (reproductora de ideología dominante) al lado de otra que construye como afirmación de lo nacional y crítica de imposición”.

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and Dorfman's ideas, 50 years after the original publication of their book. After all, if it is a fact that, on the one hand, the book has its merits (and its courage), on the other, it suffers from the need to impose a possible reading on these texts, as if there were no other cultural and textual elements with which they could come into consonance, dissonance, contradiction, parodic or satirical relationship, and other possibilities. By focusing strictly on ideology (which is a legitimate option), Dorfman and Mattelart end up losing sight of other fundamental aspects.

Furthermore, it seems to be clear that, for both authors (but not just them, it should be noted), comics should be (paradoxically) an *instrument* of liberation, of opposition to American imperialism, as if a simple exchange of *ideological polarity* would solve the (complex) ideology issue. Only a future and careful analysis of Quimantú's productions would allow us to see to what extent comics were perceived only as an ideological instrument (which avoided *negative* connotations) or if there were experiments of an aesthetic nature in the cartoon language.

The central fact is that Mattelart and Dorfman did not analyze the Disney comics in depth; but only the printed version of the Disney comics translated into Spanish for Chile, without taking into account the variables discussed here. This means that they analyzed not a piece of fiction, but a form of appropriation of a specific cultural and ideological product, ignoring aspects that constitute its essence. Contradictorily, they end up performing an analysis (to a certain extent) of the *surface* of the object, not of its *essence* and its contradictions as an object and as a cultural product.

Then, finally, Dorfman and Mattelart in their analysis look *only* at the Disney comics: there would therefore be, for example, no other Chilean title with which they could ideologically oppose. This option suggests that local production, until then, was poor (or incapable, or insufficient) to face North American ducks and mice. Paradox: both, in their eagerness to denounce cultural imperialism, suffer from the same evil as it: they ignore the Chilean comic reality and its potential forms of resistance. In addition, they ignore the comic in general as an aesthetic form, resistance and new possibilities – but that is another story.

In short (and sounding slightly Zen): when you look only at Disney comics, you look only at Disney comics. ■

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