

The Dialogic Relationships and the Involving Discourse on the Social-Historical Condition of a Mistress / *As relações dialógicas e os discursos envolventes sobre a condição histórico-social de uma mulher amante*

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to understand the discourses that compose a mistress's social-historical condition. We reflect on how a woman in an extramarital relationship ethically and discursively constructs the society's view on her love life. Within the scope of Applied Linguistics, we interpret the historicity of discursive acts and the repercussion of such acts on the representation of subjectivities, by analyzing the involving discourses in such subjectivities. Accordingly, we consider the studies on the dialogic relationships of the discourse and on the active responsive understanding of the so-called Bakhtin Circle. The findings point to a discourse that resumes the notion of a mistress who is subservient, dependent, guilty, and a homewrecker. Despite these connotations, the interviewee demonstrates a relevant degree of active responsiveness when she renames and, consequently, re-signifies her condition as a mistress.

KEYWORDS: Involving discourse; Dialogic relationships; Discursive ethics; Active responsive understanding; Mistress

RESUMO

Neste artigo, objetivamos compreender os discursos que compõem a condição histórico-social de uma amante. Para isso, procuramos refletir sobre o modo como uma mulher em uma relação extraconjugual constrói ético-discursivamente a visão da sociedade a respeito da sua condição amorosa. Inseridos no campo de estudos da Linguística Aplicada, buscamos interpretar a historicidade dos atos discursivos e a repercussão desses atos na representação das subjetividades, por meio da análise dos discursos envolventes ali presentificados. Em vista disso, consideramos os estudos sobre as relações dialógicas do discurso e a compreensão responsiva ativa do chamado Círculo de Bakhtin. Os resultados apontam para um discurso que resgata a noção de mulher amante subserviente, dependente, culpada e destruidora de lares. Apesar dessas conotações, a entrevistada demonstra um relevante grau de responsividade ativa ao renomear e, conseqüentemente, ressignificar a sua condição amorosa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Discurso envolvente; Relações dialógicas; Ética discursiva; Compreensão responsiva ativa; Mulher amante

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Introduction

Within the scope of Applied Linguistics (AL), a transdisciplinary social science which is investigative and constantly inquisitive about language practice issues, the purpose of this paper is to discuss “mutable and contradictory linguistic practices that people experience” (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p.36).¹ We analyze the historicity of discursive acts and the repercussion of such acts on the subjects’ memory and social positions. By relating practice to theory, AL is designed “as a place of investment in re-describing social life” (MOITA LOPES, 2006, p.31)² of the marginalized subject – herein the mistress –, considering the voice of the one who experiences such social condition. After all, AP is conceived as “an engaged science, i.e., permeated with values” (OLIVEIRA, 2016, p.52),³ which has the social commitment to “contribute to coping with problems related to people’s social practices, or rather, questioning such problems or even (de-re)constructing them” (MOREIRA JÚNIOR, 2018, p.64),⁴ by defying the limits of a universalizing perspective on the production of knowledge, in a necessary movement of unlearning (FABRÍCIO, 2006).

Let us observe the condition of women who, along the history of mankind, were constrained by the construction of a subjectivity which put them in a social position of subalternity, and emotional, social and financial dependence in relation to the male figure. Firstly, they were dependent on their fathers, uncles and brothers. Subsequently, they depended on their husbands. Their sexual impulses and desires were supervised and tamed by the Church and by the State social institutions. *Normal* women, besides having to have a good reputation, were required to be immune to sexual arousal and to behave according to moral principles and good manners, as “they also bore the burden of original sin and, therefore, their sexuality had to be particularly watched” (ARAÚJO, 2017, p.49).⁵

¹ Text in original: “práticas linguísticas mutáveis e contraditórias que as pessoas vivem.”

TN. Except where otherwise indicated, the translations have been done by me, for the publication of this article.

² Text in original: “como lugar de investimento em uma redescritção da vida social.”

³ Text in original: “uma ciência interessada, ou seja, atravessada por valores.”

⁴ Text in original: “contribuir com encaminhamentos de problemas das práticas sociais das pessoas, ou melhor, questioná-los ou até mesmo (des-re)construí-los.”

⁵ Text in original: “ela também carregava o peso do pecado original e por isso, sobretudo sua sexualidade, devia ser vigiada muito de perto.”

The Brazilian society experienced several changes during the nineteenth century, which led to the formation of a bourgeois mentality that reorganizes family and household practices, time and women's activities (D'INCAO, 2017).⁶ In the Brazilian colonial period and sometime after, finding a good marriage was the object of concern for young women. It was a family commitment that was supposed to follow norms prior to and after marriage, i.e., from maintaining virginity to being restrained in conjugal relations. Women were to be devoted to the household, to the family and to the marriage. They were expected to raise the children, do housework and take care of their spouses. Besides such presumed features, women were not obligated to do any productive work. However, they had the duty to maintain the status, as they were fundamental to contributing to the "family project of social mobility by means of their postures in ballrooms as hostesses and, in everyday life in general, as model wives and good mothers" (D'INCAO, 2017, p.229).⁷ Accordingly, adultery was deemed as a serious crime. It was considered a crime and a sin when committed by women, for which they could pay with their own lives, as "the law allowed 'men who caught their wives in the act of adultery to legitimately kill them and their adulterous lovers'" (ARAÚJO, 2017, p.59).⁸

On the other hand, the Church and the State were lenient with adulterous men, considering that "they were completely free to live their sexuality as long as it did not threaten their family's properties" (SOIHET, 2017, p.381).⁹ As a consequence, men could avenge their honor when they caught their wives in the act of adultery. According to the Brazilian Criminal Code of 1890, "only women were punished for adultery, with one-year to three-year imprisonment. Men were only deemed as adulterous if they had a concubine to whom they provided financial support" (SOIHET, 2017, p.381).¹⁰ Nevertheless, their punishments were not like those applied to women.

Bearing in mind this brief portrayal of the conjugal and extramarital relationships between men and women a little over a century ago, it is possible to analyze today's

⁶ As changes, the author cites the consolidation of capitalism, the enhancement of urban life with new forms of social interactions, and the rise of the bourgeoisie.

⁷ Text in original: "projeto familiar de mobilidade social através de sua postura nos salões como anfitriãs e na vida cotidiana, em geral, como esposas modelares e boas mães."

⁸ Text in original: "a própria lei permitia que 'achando o homem casado sua mulher em adultério, licitamente poderá matar assim a ela como o adúltero.'"

⁹ Text in original: "tinha plena liberdade de exercer sua sexualidade desde que não ameaçasse o patrimônio familiar."

¹⁰ Text in original: "só a mulher era penalizada por adultério, sendo punida com prisão celular de um a três anos. O homem só era considerado adúltero no caso de possuir concubina teúda e manteúda."

repercussions of the discourses¹¹ of such historical period. The society still grants men the power to have extramarital relationships, whereas women are not allowed to do so. Moreover, the role of mistress is considered despicable. Women are strongly criticized and marginalized in both situations: as adulterous wives and as mistresses. In contrast, men in the same conditions are considered virile, the very symbol of manhood. Such social scenario is acceptable and highly perceived as normal, to the extent that adulterous men often are not questioned about their infidelity. Consequently, there are discourses which are gender-related – some things are allowed or not; there are separate places and roles. These particular discourses, permissions, spaces and roles are supervised by society through coercive discourses and through the impression of a discursive ethics, i.e., meanings which are deemed as appropriate for the experienced situations. Meanings which are shared, in order to understand what it means to be faithful and unfaithful in society, and the need for punishment or for defending honor because of men or women's actions, explain the desire to structure meanings, and, obviously, the desire for a predictability of discursive ethics (SOUTO MAIOR, 2019). Such ethics is understood as a group of meanings which are shared as *truthful*, as involving discourse (SOUTO MAIOR, 2009, 2020; LIMA; SOUTO MAIOR, 2012).

The term *involving discourse* refers to the impression of truth, conveyed *a priori* by some linguistic-discursive segments, regardless of their genealogical origin or regardless of a possible need to update their meanings in specific events. We can even state that the involving discourse refers to meanings that are socially and historically given to speakers, as a social memory which may reinforce power relations and which may work as a strategy to maintain power.

In this context, meanings construct the intelligibility of the world and of social practices. Meanings are perceived in and through discourse. In this study discourse is understood from an ideological and dialogic perspective (VOLOŠINOV, 1983;¹² VOLOŠINOV, 1973).¹³ We consider language as an element which is fundamental to comprehend social practices, by way of understanding how discourses operate. According

¹¹ The relation among social practices, discourses and meanings are addressed later in this article.

¹² Reference in English: VOLOŠINOV, V. N. What is language? In: *Irish Slavonic Studies*, n. 4. Translated by Noel Owen. Belfast: Queen's University. 1983. pp.93-113.

¹³ Reference in English: VOLOŠINOV, V. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Translated by Ladislav Metejka and I.R. Titunik. New York and London: Seminar Press, 1973.

to Vološinov (1983, p.103),¹⁴ “without words there could have been no science, or literature, etc. In a nutshell, no culture could have come into existence if mankind had been deprived of the possibility of social interaction, the materialized form of which is our language.” From and with discourse, certain identitary constitutions are constructed, reproduced and/or reformulated through certain ethical and discursive events,¹⁵ as we discuss later in this paper.

Therefore, it is our objective to understand the discourses that compose the social-historical condition of a mistress, through meanings that are the bases for interpreting such discourses. In order to achieve such purpose, we reflect on how a woman in an extramarital relationship¹⁶ – participant of this study – ethically and discursively constructs society’s view on her love life. Our discourse analysis is based on the perspective of the so-called Bakhtin Circle. Bearing that in mind, this study proposes two pertinent questions: a) Which discourses does this woman have, as to her love life? and b) How does she understand the society’s view on women who engage in extramarital relationships? The questions call for an interpretative analysis (OLIVEIRA, 2008), as they propel the observation of the displacement of meanings, when we study what the interviewee registers – about the discourse of the other, in a movement of alterity. Such inquiry oriented the semi-structured interview we conducted, in which the participant answered previously formulated questions, related to the study abovementioned. She also answered other questions, which were asked during the interview, so that she could better express the discourses she constructed.

This paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, we discuss the notion of discourse, responsiveness and ethical and discursive act. In the second one, we present, from a historical perspective, the conditions of extramarital relationships from the period

¹⁴ For reference, see footnote 12.

¹⁵ As examples, lyrics of famous songs in the Brazilian Northeast, still often played in urban popular parties, ratify certain meanings or beliefs. The songs *Amor de rapariga* (*Love of a Rapariga*) and *Rapariga é você* (*You are the Rapariga*), both launched in the first decade of the twentieth-first century, are about the conflict between two women – a man’s wife and an alleged mistress. The lyrics question which one would be the best partner, without discussing the man’s responsibility as an adulterous man or his commitment to the women. On the contrary, in both songs there is a dispute between the women, about which one would get the man, and the mistress is totally to blame for the extramarital relationship. This seems to give the man a victim status, or, better yet, it gives him a characteristic which is deemed as *natural* in male behavior. In this article we analyze this very situation, the one of the mistress, and propose some historically-situated discussions.

TN. The word *rapariga* is a derogatory term, and in some places it means a prostitute or a woman who is sexually promiscuous.

¹⁶ We have chosen this term, as it is well-known and socially shared.

named Brasil Colônia (Colonial Period) to the 1950s, the years known as the Golden Era. Finally, the third part shows the analyses.

1 The Dialogic Orientation of the Discourse

We refer to discourse when we address human relations, which are realized by means of multiple languages (VOLOŠINOV, 1983;¹⁷ VOLOŠINOV, 1973).¹⁸ Based on the Bakhtin Circle, we understand that the discursive act cannot be evaluated as an individual, original and unprecedented phenomenon. On the contrary, the discursive act is conceived by and in the voice of different subjects. Hence, it is a social phenomenon, which is shared and experienced collectively, although we cannot determine its roots in the social memory. Also in line with the Bakhtin Circle, Rohling (2014, p.45) states that “discourse is language itself, in its concrete and living integrity. It is not language as the specific object of Linguistics.”¹⁹ Pursuant to this paradigm, we agree that

discourse designates the whole conceptual scope in which knowledge is produced and reproduced. Not only does it include what is actually thought of and articulated, *but it also determines what can be said or heard, and what is silenced, what is acceptable and what is taboo.* Accordingly, discourse is a field or arena in which language is used in particular ways. Such field or arena is produced in and through social practices, institutions and actions (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006, p.140, emphasis added).²⁰

Bearing these reflections in mind, we understand that discourse is dialogic by nature, as it is constituted in the field of human life, in human experiences, and it permeates dialogic relationships. Voices and meeting of voices prompt certain patterns of speech, and also constitute social relations, which are in a way *monitored* by meanings traditionally assumed by subjects. Therefore, studying discourse and language means to

¹⁷ For reference, see footnote 12.

¹⁸ For reference, see footnote 13.

¹⁹ Text in original: “o discurso é a própria língua em sua integridade concreta e viva e não a língua como objeto específico da Linguística.”

²⁰ Text in original: “o discurso designa o território conceitual inteiro no qual o conhecimento é produzido e reproduzido. Inclui não somente o que é, na verdade, pensado e articulado, *mas também determina o que pode ser dito ou ouvido e o que é silenciado, o que é aceitável e o que é tabu.* O discurso, nesse sentido, é um campo ou domínio dentro do qual a linguagem é usada de modos particulares. Esse campo ou domínio é produzido nas e por meio das práticas sociais, instituições e ações (KUMARAVADIVELU, 2006, p.140; emphasis added).”

look at such relations, as “language lives only in the dialogic interaction of those who make use of it” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.183).²¹ As an effect, discourses linger over time and history, permeated with the voices of others, which inhabit in us. At times we are not aware of their origin. Thus, in discourse the dialogic relationships are materialized by its two-fold directedness: “it is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward *another’s discourse, toward someone’s speech*” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.185; emphasis in original).²² This two-fold directedness, named as such by Bakhtin, is realized in and by utterance, as it is in utterance that we can hear the voices of others and construct meanings that involve social practices and that are involved by such practices. This movement of shared meanings has at least two dimensions, as the “dialogic orientation of discourse – an internal dialogicity that pervades semantic and expressive layers of language – manifests in two ways: *through orientation towards the already-said and through orientation towards the response*” (ROHLING, 2014, p.45; emphasis in original).²³

Souto Maior (2020) states that involving discourses operate in this process of resuming (reproduction of meanings) and of response (production of meanings). They bring a certain understanding of truth and unanimity, i.e., besides being true (thought of as truthful because of repetition), it is a truth which goes easily undetected. Consequently, the continuous representation of truth in social practices of language increasingly strengthens the existence of such discourses as something *natural*, as given meanings, as something taken for granted, something adequate, well placed and easily undetected (SOUTO MAIOR, 2009; 2020).

Involving discourses may still have a more discursive perspective, within the scope of meaning perceived in the text as a whole, extracted as a general idea of what has been concretely explained; or have a perspective, so to speak, which is more *concrete* and situated in the text, such as a linguistic segment (a proverb, a popular saying, a sentence from a media campaign etc.). In both cases, reversibility between them is possible. A sentence from a jingle may have a sexist discourse as basis, which would be in the first

²¹ Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Edited and translated by Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Eight Printing Kindle Edition, 1999.

²² For reference, see footnote 21.

²³ Text in original: “orientação dialógica do discurso – dialogicidade interna que penetra os estratos semânticos e expressivos da língua – manifesta-se de duas formas: pela *orientação para o já-dito* e pela *orientação para a resposta* (ROHLING, 2014, p.45; emphasis in original).”

group described above – the more discursive perspective. Generally, there is the discourse repetition as a characteristic, a linguistic echo, so to speak. Such characteristic is expressed in the feeling we experience, as speakers of a language, when we hear something that sounds common, a meaning we apparently agree on, in a memory of having already heard such meaning, or the perception of having heard a certain sentence – a feeling of familiarity. This feeling is immanently coercive. It somehow tames any other close attention to something said. If it is common to say, it must be true. This is the very strategy of discourse repetition, just like the metaphor ‘constant dripping wears away a stone’. Sentences like *women are fragile, those who work get rich, sinners go to hell*, and even their negatives, are examples of involving discourse, for they have the feeling of the already-said.

In order to understand the social-historical conditions of the extramarital relationship of the participant of this study, it is necessary to examine the already-said by the subjects’ cultural experiences – the interviewer and the interviewee – according to their roles. Then it is possible to comprehend the web of complex significations of their *responses* in their social positions. Meanings maximize responsibility for something said, inasmuch as *the one who speaks* takes a position on something and fosters actions in social interactions that stem from such position. This web of significations has wide reach in the experienced lives of subjects in the world and it is guided by different possibilities for the future. A reflection on the discourses that compose social relations may provide the discursive denaturalization of involving discourse, for example, in pursuit of a discursive ethics. The critical understanding of the responsibility involved in the act of speaking may provide humanity with the real possibility of interaction dissociated from hate, incomprehension and violence. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to point out that, according to studies of the Bakhtin Circle, understanding also has a dialogic feature, due to its active and responsive nature, as “for each word of the utterance that we are in process of understanding, we, as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words. The greater their number and weight, the deeper and more substantial our understanding will be” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.102).²⁴

There is no such thing as passive understanding, as it would be at the abstraction level, considering that words always come from someone who takes a position on them

²⁴ For reference, see footnote 13.

and addresses someone else with them. This is the foundation of the dialogic feature of words. After all, Vološinov (1973, p.86)²⁵ is emphatic in stating that “a word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other depends on my addressee.” Accordingly, all speakers assume an *active responsive position* in relation to the discourse of others, which starts at the moment of hearing and understanding, as “any understanding is imbued with response” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.68).²⁶ From such perspective, all speakers are respondents in discursive practices, which, due to their dialogic nature, do not admit a passive understanding, and reject it. Zozzoli (2012, p.257) points out that active understanding, in all cases, presumes an active position on what is said and on what is understood, and “this means that active understanding is always present in social life, just like there is always dialogue.”²⁷

Words, therefore, are not immune to life, to time, to the place where they are uttered, and to ideology, as already mentioned. Nevertheless, speakers do not own words, and words are not autonomous of the historicity that pervades them, as “everything that is said, expressed, is located outside the ‘soul’ of the speaker and does not belong only to him” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.121),²⁸ even though words are updated in the subjects. Words and, as a consequence, utterances and discourses, are a group of values and meanings (BAKHTIN, 1986).²⁹ That is why “dialogic relationships may be understood as axiological places/positions of subjects in the concrete acts of life” (ROHLING, 2014, p.45).³⁰

Dialogic relationships are only materialized in language, in its concrete and living integrity, when they are substantialized in the voices of subjects who are real and historically situated. Such relationships are not reducible to logical relationships nor to

²⁵ For reference, see footnote 13.

²⁶ Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of Speech Genres. In: *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern M. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.60-102

²⁷ ZOZZOLI, Rita. The Notion of Active Responsive Understanding in the Teaching and Learning Process Translated into English by Raquel D Elboux Couto Nunes. *Bakhtiniana, Rev. Estud. Discurso*, São Paulo, v. 7, n. 1, pp.252-267, Jan./Jun. 2012.

Available on: <https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/bakhtiniana/article/view/8943>. Access on Aug 31st, 2020.

²⁸ Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis. In: *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Translated by Vern M. McGee. Edited by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. pp.103-131.

²⁹ For reference, see footnote 28.

³⁰ Text in original: “as relações dialógicas podem ser compreendidas como lugares/posições axiológicas dos sujeitos nos atos concretos da vida.”

relationships oriented semantically, as social practices, which are at the bases of the events, are authorial and, therefore, ethical and discursive. Such relationships – logical and oriented semantically – are fundamental for dialogic relationships to be embodied. However, “they must enter another sphere of existence: they must become *discourse*, that is, an utterance, and receive an *author*, that is, the creator of the given utterance whose position it expresses” (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.184; emphasis in the original).³¹ Thus, dialogic relationships are not devoid of meanings, or of ideologies, of voices, inasmuch as “language, in the process of its practical implementation, is inseparable from its ideological or behavioral impletion” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.36).³²

The next part of this paper, in line with this theoretical basis, presents the social-historical scenario of the conditions of extramarital relationships in the Brazilian history, especially with respect to women’s role, in an attempt to later understand the axiological positions of the subject of this study, by relating such positions to the discourses underlying her speech. Such discourses have lingered over time and resisted social reconfigurations, as they recur in the arena of the already-said and, at the same time, they are oriented towards the discourse/response, as “the word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context” (BAKHTIN, 1981, p.3998-4004).³³

2 The Social-Historical Conditions of Extramarital Relationships

By resuming the discussion on conjugal relations between men and women, started in the beginning of this article, we now relate them to adultery and to infidelity, focusing on men and women’s social behavior when it comes to relationships.

Unlike husbands, throughout the colonial period and more recently³⁴ in Brazil, women who were unfaithful to their husbands were very much criticized and could be punished with their own lives, as already mentioned earlier in this paper. Bourgeois

³¹ For reference, see footnote 21. TN. Unlike the reference in Portuguese, the publication in English show emphasis on both words: *discourse* and *author*.

³² For reference, see footnote 13.

³³ Reference in English: BAKHTIN, M. Discourse in the Novel. *In: The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin. Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, Kindle Edition, 1981. pp.259-422.

³⁴ We refer to the first half of the twentieth century.

practices which established, for instance, the living room as a public place inside the private space of the household, added one more possibility to watch and supervise women's conduct, according to what society expected from them (D'INCAO, 2017).

Female adultery was a symbol of great humiliation for men, as mentioned in the introduction of this study. However, when husbands were unfaithful, wives were advised to cope with their frustration and avoid doing things that could place the family integrity at risk. They were instructed to remain faithful, friendly and submissive, even if their husbands did not act the same, or worse, even if they treated them with all sorts of violence. Some involving discourses such as *good women are family women* are already heard in social practices that interweave the web of significations in interactions.

Before the 1950s, male infidelity was socially accepted and naturalized. It was “justified by men's *polygamist character* – a *natural* factor which deserved social tolerance and women's understanding, even when it was considered a *weakness*” (PINSKY, 2017, p.635; emphasis in original).³⁵ Language, constitutive of all social processes, institutes, at the same time, a discursive ethics in relation to meanings that compose such social practices. In other words, in the discourse lie all bases for supporting these *shared truths* or the involving discourses of the society of that period, which still leads us to certain meanings today, such as: *it is normal when men cheat, women must remain married, women are the ones who hold a home together emotionally*.

Male adultery was not discussed, as their adventures were deemed as irrelevant and temporary, which would not interfere in the peaceful conjugal life, since the fact that men returned home was consolation for the betrayed wives (PINSKY, 2017). Even today, as a reflection of such discourses, modern families which started with a bigamous partner are not rare, although it is still a crime under the Brazilian law. On the other hand, women seem to be socially blamed for the extramarital relationships, as “all anger, if any, should be directed towards the *other woman, the rival, the husband's lover*” (PINSKY, 2017, p.635; emphasis in original).³⁶ In sum, there are two opposite roles – one of submissive women and another one of dishonest women. Such roles also maintain involving discourses – *women men should marry* are the former; *women men can have adventures*

³⁵ Text in original: “justificava-se pelo *temperamento poligâmico* dos homens – um fator *natural* que, mesmo quando considerado uma *fraqueza*, merecia a condescendência social e a compreensão das mulheres.”

³⁶ Text in original: “toda a revolta, se houvesse, deveria recair sobre *a outra, a rival, a amante do marido*.”

with are the latter. Both extreme roles lead men to perdition: married women, if are not submissive, destroy the home; adventurous women are to blame, as they are homewreckers.

Women then were to blame for authorship of and responsibility for these relationships, and they seem to be still blamed today. Wives should be blamed for not taking care of their husbands, for not being dedicated enough to the full happiness of their beloved. Consequently, they should be blamed for not complying with the requirements of ideal wives. *Other women* should be blamed for being “*homewreckers, unscrupulous advantage-takers, irresponsible women, or naive young women seduced by experienced men*” (PINSKY, 2017, p.636; emphasis in original).³⁷ After all, it was assumed that men had different sexual needs, which in practice entitled them to have erotic extramarital adventures, as such needs had to do with their *natural* characteristics (PINSKY, 2017). Therefore, “wives should not bother their husbands with questions, suspicions or jealousy” (PINSKY, 2017, p.632).³⁸ Women’s boldness and audacity would be harmful for family and social stability, which could compromise their own lives.

In the late nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, women’s lives were at men’s disposal. As female infidelity could be punished with death, men who killed their adulterous wives were protected by law, “with the argument that they were ‘in a state of complete deprivation of senses and intelligence’ in the act of committing the crime, i.e., affected by momentary madness or delusion”(SOIHET, 2017, p.381).³⁹ On the other hand, male infidelity was considered a matter of private domain. Men did not have to address this matter in any public institution, including the police, as men at the time “were, more often than not, judged by the appropriateness of their behavior, according to the rules of the moral conduct considered legitimate, than by the criminal act itself” (SOIHET, 2017, p.382).⁴⁰

Ideal men were deemed as such when they were dedicated to their jobs and to providing for their family, their main obligation. In society, their subjectivities were

³⁷ Text in original: “*destruidora de lares, aproveitadora sem escrúpulos, leviana ou uma moça ingênua seduzida por um homem mais experiente.*”

³⁸ Text in original: “os maridos não deveriam ser incomodados com suspeitas, interrogatórios ou ciúme das esposas.”

³⁹ Text in original: “com o argumento de que se achava ‘em estado de completa privação de sentidos e inteligência’ no ato de cometer o crime, ou seja, acometido de loucura ou desvario momentâneo.”

⁴⁰ Text in original: “eram julgados muito mais pela adequação de seu comportamento às regras de conduta moral, consideradas legítimas, do que propriamente pelo ato criminoso em si.”

constituted on the basis of this model. On the contrary, women were supposed to be mothers and wives, submissive, faithful and dedicated to their husbands. The model of ideal women was in line with male morality, “according to which any woman who did not comply with the ideal norm was a potential ‘whore’,” (FONSECA, 2017, p.532).⁴¹ Some discourses that compose such female subjectivity are involving discourses such as *decent women’s clothes, honest women’s way of speaking*, and even *righteous women’s practices*. After all, “women could be mothers, sisters, daughters, churchgoers, but by no means lovers” (ARAÚJO, 2017, p.73).⁴² The mentality of the time regarding adultery was one that believed that “it was impossible for men to uphold the obligation to be faithful, as their sexuality was extremely demanding, and they could slip, in case of any ‘seduction’. Women were expected to understand such ‘weaknesses’” (SOIHET, 2017, p.384).⁴³

This discrepancy between men and women, which was totally asymmetric and submission-related, was linguistically marked in the treatment of women. At the time, the word *madam* was used to refer to wives, whose role was motherly and decorous. In a way, such title inhibited scandals, as the term conferred upon women a position of superiority in relation to other women. This position was not supposed to be undermined because of conjugal adversities. On the other hand, mistresses were referred to as *the other women*, whose role was to satisfy and please men with sexual intercourses and dinners, and to let them have the pleasure of giving them gifts.

Pinsky (2017, p.613) explains that “not only were sexual relations between a man and different women permitted, but they were also often encouraged.”⁴⁴ This male polygamist behavior was deemed as a sign of virility. Women were seen as those who corrupted the good and the order, which justified the intense supervision they were under – by their families, by the Church and by the State. This view is rooted in Christian teachings, according to which women were “doomed, by definition, to eternally pay for

⁴¹ Text in original: “segundo a qual qualquer mulher que não correspondia à norma ideal era uma ‘rameira’ em potencial.”

⁴² Text in original: “a mulher podia ser mãe, irmã, filha, religiosa, mas de modo algum amante.”

⁴³ Text in original: “a fidelidade obrigatória era impossível de ser mantida pelo homem cuja sexualidade era excessivamente exigente, resvalando a qualquer ‘sedução’. Julgava-se dever da esposa a compreensão de tais ‘fraquezas’.”

⁴⁴ Text in original: “relações sexuais dos homens com várias mulheres não só eram permitidas, como frequentemente incentivadas.”

the mistake of Eve, the first female, who led Adam to sin, taking away from future humanity the possibility of rejoicing in paradisiacal innocence” (ARAÚJO, 2017, p.46).⁴⁵

In the 1950s, women’s subjectivity was constructed on the basis of the characteristics of the time: the strengthening of democracy; the increase in educational and professional possibilities for men and women; the rise of the bourgeoisie; the enhancement of access to information, leisure and consumption; the female participation in the economic development; and the significant changes to social practices of dating and family intimacy (PINSKY, 2017), which partly resemble present conditions.

Nevertheless, at that time female and male roles were still characterized by prejudice. According to such roles, *ideal* women were subject to male authority, especially in conjugal relations. Pinsky (2017, p.609) states that “in practical terms, morality favored male sexual experiences, whereas it sought to restrict female sexuality to the parameters of the conventional marriage.”⁴⁶

3 Constitution of *Corpus* and Analyses

In the studied presented herein, we analyzed ten (10) enunciative/discursive sequences of an interview conducted with a woman about her extramarital relationship. We aimed at examining her condition as a mistress from two perspectives: how she perceives her condition as an extramarital partner, and how she believes the society views such condition. We observed the implications of such views in her discourse.

In order to classify and compose the material for analysis, we started by relating the participant’s discourse to the ethical and discursive meanings which were perpetuated, – from the Brazilian Colonial Period until the early twentieth century, especially during the Golden years, which correspond to the period right after the end of the Second World War –, of women’s affective role as far as extramarital relationships are concerned.

The semi-structured interview, recorded in audio and transcribed later, was conducted in October 2016 in Maceió-AL, at the residence of a participant’s friend, and

⁴⁵ Text in original: “estava condenada, por definição, a pagar eternamente pelo erro de Eva, a primeira fêmea, que levou Adão ao pecado e tirou da humanidade futura a possibilidade de gozar da inocência paradisiaca.”

⁴⁶ Text in original: “na prática, a moralidade favorecia as experiências sexuais masculinas enquanto procurava restringir a sexualidade feminina aos parâmetros do casamento convencional.”

in his company. It is important to mention that the interviewee was aware of the purpose of the study, and that she had accepted the invitation to participate in it weeks prior to the interview. The speech sequences are presented as they were produced.

At the time, the participant was 32 years of age. She was a licensed teacher and worked in a small town in the state of Alagoas, where she was born, approximately 80 kilometers from Maceió, the capital of the state. Her extramarital relationship had been going on for two years. Besides such relationship, she affirmed she was not romantically involved with anyone else. She chose not to give any information about the man. The silence about her partner could already be a sign of the behavior expected from a mistress. Discreetness is a fundamental element in this kind of relationship and a criterion for the previous agreement on the man's infidelity.

As the continuance of our proposed analysis, we present three subsections: 1) *The importance of naming for control of meanings*, 2) *The dialogic tension in the construction of speech*, and 3) *The risks and consequences of the other meanings*.

3.1 The Importance of Naming for Control of Meanings

By looking at the findings of this study, we observe the constant naturalization of the condition of a mistress in the interviewee's speech. Her discourse seems to be anchored in ideas and arguments going back to the situation of women in the Brazilian Colonial Period last century. In this period, society supported and gave men the power to have and provide for an extramarital relationship, whereas mistresses had the passive role of adjusting to this situation, having to be faithful and respectful to the men's marital status.

In the beginning of the conversation, the interviewer asks the interviewee what the best word would be to describe the condition of a person in an extramarital relationship, so that this word could be used to refer to her. The interviewer suggests some names, but the interviewee introduces a word that was not listed in the proposed options, as enunciative sequence 1 shows.

Sequence 1

INTERVIEWER: Before we start the interview, which term do you think best describes this situation? In other words, which do you think

is the best term: “lover,” “unofficial partner”... or “concubine”? I don’t know, which one do you think is the best term to describe this situation?
INTERVIEWEE: Girlfriend, I think.
INTERVIEWER: Girlfriend?
INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

According to Borges and Rocha-Coutinho (2015, p.179), “the act of naming, when addressed to someone, establishes a relation between personal identity and society.”⁴⁷ Vološinov (1973, p.97)⁴⁸ presents a sociological structure of language and states that it is necessary to acknowledge “the individual utterance as a purely sociological phenomenon.” Moreover, “realized expression, in its turn, exerts a powerful, reverse influence on experience: it begins to tie inner life together, giving it more definite and lasting expression” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.90).⁴⁹

Thus, we understand that the names referring to women who are mistresses, suggested by the interviewer – *lover*, *unofficial partner* and *concubine* –, may stress a certain construction of meaning which did not correspond to one the interviewee identified with, the one she wanted to construct ethically and discursively. Naming institutes ethical and discursive meanings and, therefore, institutes an identity (BORGES; ROCHA-COUTINHO, 2015). The interviewee, by choosing the word *girlfriend*, aims to re-signify her condition, for herself and for the interviewer, in a different and romantic way. By doing so she establishes a discursive ethics as far as meaning is concerned, i.e., there is a suggestion for negotiating image.

The choice of the word *girlfriend* may be justified by the assumption that this sign could be socially dissociated from the *mistress* archetype. As Vološinov (1973, p.86, emphasis in original) states, “*word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by whose word it is and *for whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*.”⁵⁰

In the Golden Years, having a girlfriend/boyfriend was understood as a preparing stage for a more stable relationship: engagement and subsequent marriage. It had such social importance that “dating had the characteristics of a phase of mutual analyses of

⁴⁷ Text in original: “o ato da nomeação, quando dirigido a uma pessoa, estabelece uma relação entre identidade pessoal e sociedade.”

⁴⁸ For reference, see footnote 13.

⁴⁹ For reference, see footnote 13.

⁵⁰ For reference, see footnote 13.

those who could be future spouses and of their respective families. It served as a period of adaptation for the couple (PINSKY, 2017, p.616).”⁵¹ It is interesting to note that *having a girlfriend/boyfriend* is an act that names such stage prior to marriage. Those who date are not married, but, according to discourse ethics, there is the marriage intention. In the web of significations, the term institutes a moment of preparation for marriage, as sequence 2 seems to indicate.

Sequence 2

INTERVIEWEE: [...] He [the man] will also have that responsibility for his girlfriend. And sometimes, *in the future it may even become official*, do you understand?

INTERVIEWER: So you see a possibility of becoming official, for example?

INTERVIEWEE: *Yes*, if he truly likes her and if she likes him, if there is really respect. Yes (emphasis added).

Accordingly, we consider that when the interviewee refuses all the other names – negatively marked – about her involvement in an extramarital relationship, and adopts the name *girlfriend*, she re-signifies such condition for her and for the other, which alleviates the social burden connected to the well-known names, as “no utterance can be put together without value judgement. Every utterance is above all an *evaluative orientation*. Therefore, each element in a living utterance not only has a meaning but also has a value” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.105; emphasis in original).⁵² The axiology of the sign *girlfriend* is only clarified with the support of other signs.

According to Vološinov (1973) understanding is dialogic and requires a *counter word*. The term *girlfriend* then would be the counter word chosen by the interviewee, and such counter word is vested with a new discursive intent, inasmuch as “there is no such thing as word without evaluative accent” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.103).⁵³ The word *girlfriend* carries a meaning which is so particular in the interviewee’s speech, to the point that it is not subject to adjectives that define the legal aspect of the condition, i.e., as legitimate or not. The characterization becomes impossible, as the new term, like the other

⁵¹ Text in original: “o namoro adquiria características de uma fase de estudos mútuos daqueles que poderiam ser os futuros cônjuges e suas famílias, servia como um tempo de adaptação do casal.”

⁵² For reference, see footnote 13.

⁵³ For reference, see footnote 13.

similar terms, would inherit the negative understanding of the condition. This interpretation arises from the dialogue that took place in enunciative sequence 3.

Sequence 3

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned respect. So, how do you see that in relation to his official girlfriend?

The interviewee is quiet for a brief moment.

INTERVIEWEE: His wife.

INTERVIEWER: Yes, that's right.

INTERVIEWEE: But, you see, the one showing lack of respect is not so much the girlfriend. It is him. Do you understand?

In sequence 3, as well as in sequence 1, the girlfriend took a new position, which was actively responsive, in order to face the socially shared judgments on her condition. Her position was a movement of meaning speculation or one of a discursive ethics of her own, which leads us to classify women's condition, in this sort of relationship, as *official* and *unofficial*. This classification always places the later – the *unofficial* – in a circumstance which is socially reprehensible and embarrassing.

Still in sequence 3, the girlfriend seems to reflect on her partner's responsibility for to the construction of this condition, as he and his wife are the only ones in an official relationship. On the other hand, the girlfriend, despite her condition, is legally single and, therefore, may not classify as adulterous. Considering the dialogue reproduced in sequence 1, we hereinafter adopt the term chosen by the interviewee to refer to her condition as a woman involved in an extramarital relationship: *girlfriend*.

3.2 The Dialogic Tension in the Construction of Speech

The negative evaluations of the words suggested by the interviewer in sequence 1, among other words used regularly, are brought up in the girlfriend's discourse, as sequences 4 and 5 show.

Sequence 4

INTERVIEWER: So what do you think of women who date married men?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, *we know it is not right...* but [looking amused] there are advantages.... It is... for example, the married man, he has a greater commitment when he has someone on the side. So I think this

is it. This difference. And young people today don't have this commitment (emphasis added).

Sequence 5

INTERVIEWER: Don't you think that, for a moment, he is disrespecting you, as he has someone?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, if he liked one woman he wouldn't be with two, he would choose one. But *there is the kind of men who get used to this situation... two women....* So, even if he chooses to be only with you, if he is used to this, he will date another woman, we know that this is true. *Men RARELY leave their wives for women who destroyed their families. It is rare* (emphasis added).

By judging her love life as wrong (sequence 4), and later, by associating the homewrecker image to such condition (sequence 5), the girlfriend “sees herself in an arena of detailed arguments and discussions in connection with what she should think of herself” (BORGES; COUTINHO, 2015, p.184),⁵⁴ when she considers a girlfriend as a homewrecker. The interviewee shows this understanding as something naturalized and widely socialized, when she includes the interviewer in her discourse, which she does in linguistic terms, by using the first person plural (*we know* in sequence 4 and in sequence 5), and in other sequences when she refers to this kind of relationship. This also happens when she states that it is almost impossible that the man will make the girlfriend his future wife – an involving discourse, resulting from her alleged nature as a homewrecker.

Unlike the statement of the participant in sequence 3, in sequence 5 we note two discursive dimensions that exempt men from responsibility, as involving discourse: 1) she emphasizes a certain *reality* that everyone is familiar with, i.e., a practice which is *natural* and, therefore, predictable – *there is the kind of men who get used to this situation*; and 2) the girlfriend, for a moment, becomes *the woman who destroyed his [the man's] family*. In the first dimension, cheating is a matter of habit, whereas in the second dimension, the man is a victim. In neither of the cases, he is active. In both cases, discourses function as coercive mechanisms of an establishment – the desired ideological, social, political and cultural order.

⁵⁴ Text in original: “se vê numa arena de argumentos e discussões detalhados referente ao que deveria pensar de si mesm[a].”

The concept of homewrecker is resumed in other moments, such as in sequence 6.

Sequence 6

INTERVIEWER: Do you believe that this view the society has, how the society view women who are girlfriends, do you believe this can change?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't think so.

INTERVIEWER: Why don't you think so?

INTERVIEWEE: Because this comes from.... way back, *in the old days*, people... I mean ... you know that thing. *Our parents got married for life, so only death separates them. So, even today ... that is why society today doesn't accept this. Because the woman [the girlfriend], when she gets involved in someone's marriage, she is in to destroy that family. So she will never be accepted by society* (emphasis added).

Lima and Souto Maior (2012, p.399) state that “a range of concepts, historically and socially constructed, arise in the process of active understanding. Such concepts are activated to give responses to certain discourses.”⁵⁵ Accordingly, by choosing the term *girlfriend*, the interviewee attempts to modify, for her addressee, the historically and socially constructed discourses, which “means that all produced discourses take into account other formerly produced discourses, and they are also directed towards other discourses that will be subsequently produced” (LIMA; SOUTO MAIOR, 2012, p.399).⁵⁶

The participant's addressee – the interviewer – would be the normal representative of a dominant social group (VOLOŠINOV, 1973).⁵⁷ In such case, he would represent a certain portion of people in society who are not – or pretend not to be – in extramarital relationships. The interviewer belongs to such group, whereas the interviewee fits into another group, categorized by society as one of *mistresses*. According to Vološinov (1973),⁵⁸ the normal representative would be the ideological projection we have of the other with whom we interact/talk, and to whom we respond according to what we know of his/her culture, ideology, social position etc. Therefore, in her own “defense,” when the girlfriend renames her condition, she establishes a boundary between the acceptable

⁵⁵ Text in original: “no processo de compreensão ativa surge uma gama de conceitos históricos e socialmente construídos que são ativados para emitir uma resposta a determinado discurso.”

⁵⁶ Text in original: “o que significa dizer que todo discurso produzido leva em conta outros já anteriormente produzidos e já se voltando para outros a serem produzidos posteriormente.”

⁵⁷ For reference, see footnote 13.

⁵⁸ For reference, see footnote 13.

and the unacceptable, between the tolerable and the intolerable, between what wants to be said and what cannot be heard.

Still in enunciative sequence 6, we can observe the connection of meanings the interviewee makes between the ethical and discursive notions of *marry/life* and *separate/death*. Such values are shared by the religious-oriented western society, and reproduced by the girlfriend.

These meanings are emphasized by her use of the term *destroy* when she refers to the presence of a girlfriend in a family. The meanings of separation, death and destruction are close in this discourse, which symbolizes what would be the end of a relationship considered official by the society. From the perspective of the Bakhtin Circle, the immediate social context is in dialogue with the wider social context. In other words, when the girlfriend interacts, in an ethical and discursive action, not only does she respond to her addressee, but she also responds to another's ideologies and to her own ideologies, to the institutions they both are a part of, and to society in general. For that the interviewee bases her discourse on a period which goes back much further from the time when she lives. She uses the term *in the old days*, by which she indicates that she shares the ideologies her parents had, and that appear to be still very much alive. She says: *even today* – her way of understanding the organicity of conjugal relations and the conditions of extramarital relationships.

At different moments in the course of the interview, the girlfriend turns to the notion of *respect* to designate the difference between her relationship and the relationships of other women in the same condition. When asked to elaborate on this matter, she answers:

Sequence 7

INTERVIEWEE: Because, like, there is the case where the man treats his girlfriend as the one who he can't go out with, can't have fun, it is only "I will go..." just to hook up really. But not us. We go out when we can, we travel, one thing or another, so there is this difference. Because there is the kind of *lov...* girlfriend who can't be seen anywhere with the man, and there is the kind of man who is bold and takes her to another place, another city (emphasis added).

In sequence 7 we can point out that the interviewee hesitates when she pronounces the word *lover*, in a kind of mistake. At the moment of speaking she quickly changes the

term to *girlfriend*. Knowing that “a word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.86),⁵⁹ “meaning belongs to a word in its position between speakers,” i.e., “meaning is realized only in the process of active, responsive understanding” (VOLOŠINOV, 1973, p.102).⁶⁰ Thus, we reckon that the correction of the word – *lover* to *girlfriend* – relieves a burden of hostile meanings, in the ethical and discursive tension that was established.

In light of that, the interviewee resumes the word she chose first, which is laden with positive affection as involving discourse, in an attempt to silence or erase the meanings the word *lover* could carry. Another important point for our analysis is the categorization of kinds of girlfriend. According to the interviewee in sequence 7, there are two types of girlfriend: the other type and herself, as we show in the chart below.

The other type of girlfriend	Herself
“Can’t go out”	“We [she and he] go out when we can, we travel, one thing or another”
“Can’t have fun”	[Can have fun]
“Just to hook up really” (sexual connotation)	[Not just to hook up]
“Can’t be seen anywhere with the man”	“[He] takes her to another place, [she can be seen with him] another city”

*Comparative chart*⁶¹: the other type of girlfriend and herself
 Source: Authors of this article

It is interesting to examine, from the perspective of restrictions and displacement of meanings, the several activities she claims she can do with her boyfriend, which distinguishes her from the *other type of girlfriend*. They go out, but when they can. She can be seen with him, but not in her own town or in his. At any rate, the fact that she makes these concessions – as to space – enables her to be categorized in a subjectivity close to the *girlfriend to go out with*, not the one just to *hook up really* – a possible reference to sexual intercourse.

⁵⁹ For reference, see footnote 13.

⁶⁰ For reference, see footnote 13.

⁶¹ The utterances between brackets are inferences, assumptions and logical consequences of the concrete discourses produced by the interviewee.

3.3 The Risks and Consequences of the Other Meanings

When asked about the difficulties or dangers of being the girlfriend in a relationship, the interviewee answers:

Sequence 8

INTERVIEWEE: There are dangers, yes [looking amused], because, like, you are getting involved in someone else's relationship, and you know you are exposed to any kind of problem, any danger a... how can I say?... *a fight, right? In the middle of the street... as we know... it can even end in death.* We know the wife doesn't accept that her husband has a girlfriend out of wedlock. So the wife, she will... how can I say? ... *she will act as she pleases.* Do you understand? If she thinks there is damage for her, she will *take measures... so unfortunately a scandal may happen* (emphasis added).

In her discourse, the interviewee demonstrates to feel there is a risk for herself and for the wife, should the affair be exposed in the society. She ends up naturalizing, as involving discourse, the possibility of being punished with her own life – *it can even end in death.* Hence her life would be at the man's wife's disposal – *she will act as she pleases* and *take measures* she deems applicable in order to preserve the integrity of her family. There are displacements of ethical values and judgements that pervade the discourses with dialogic relationships, which are deeply directed towards the depreciation of women and to the naturalization of exempting men from any faults in the situation. There is not a third party in the possible fight; there are only the two women.

In the beginning of the conversation, the interviewee affirmed that her situation as girlfriend *is not right* (cf. sequence 4) in the eyes of *society* (cf. sequence 6). In her discourse, this seems to be a plausible justification for such sad condition. Nevertheless, she says there are advantages of being in this relationship, when she was asked what she thought of women who were girlfriends. According to her, the man has a greater *commitment*, maybe in a reference to financial support he may offer: *the married man, he has a greater commitment when he has someone on the side. So I think this is it. This difference. And young people today don't have this commitment* (cf. sequence 4). The interviewee suggests the possible financial support as one of the advantages of being a girlfriend in this kind of relationship.

Sequence 9

INTERVIEWER: And do you think, do you think there are only dangers and difficulties, or do you think there are also benefits?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, benefits, because today you won't get... you won't get involved in someone else's relationship, someone who has NOTHING to offer you. Do you understand? When you get involved in a relationship.... like, you will be the girlfriend, he will have, you will have advantages. I mean just like he helps at his home, he will start to help you, too.

INTERVIEWER: Yes. There is something interesting you said. Those benefits you mention.... do you mean emotional benefits or material benefits?

INTERVIEWEE: Material and emotional. It depends. If the man really cares for his girlfriend, he will give her what she wants. So, it all depends on the emotional, too. Do you understand?

INTERVIEWER: Hum... So do you think it is more for the emotional or more for the material things in this kind of relationship?

INTERVIEWEE: In my case, emotional; in my case, emotional. But we know that in several cases it is more about the material things [final word inaudible].

In sequence 9, the girlfriend confirms the subjectivity of the ideal man, widespread in the Golden Years, by using some involving discourses such as: the one who provides for his family and indulges his girlfriend. According to her, *if the man really cares for his girlfriend, he will give her what she wants*.

Moreover, the interviewer reinforces such idea, by assigning a greater social value to men who have this extramarital commitment. For her the support given by men is his responsibility, and she seems to criticize relationships which are different (cf. sequence 4). This apparently means that the relationships with younger men may not entail financial support for women, which for her would be a negative aspect.

Final Considerations

Aware of the limits of any analysis, we now turn to final considerations as to the questions initially proposed in this article – the evaluative discourses of the girlfriend on her love life, and how she perceives the society's view on women in this situation. In the examined sequences, we can clearly notice a discourse that resumes the notion of a mistress who is a subservient, dependent, guilty woman, a homewrecker. The adulterous man's responsibility for maintaining such notion is not brought to the discussion.

This notion is synthesized in the idea of *respect*, repeatedly mentioned by the girlfriend. In line with the analyses, *give oneself respect* – an expression that was common last century – refers to young women’s preparation to have self-control, according to which they “should learn how to control themselves, tell *right from wrong*, in order to preserve their virtues and contain their sexuality within strict limits” (PINSKY, 2017, p.610; emphasis in original).⁶² The expression, which was used by the girlfriend during the interview, is related to the female passiveness to accept the conditions of the relationship, i.e., accept the position of girlfriend, be with her partner only in places that are safe for him, render accounts to him of her actions (cf. sequence 10 and the following), honor the discreetness necessary for the man to maintain the relationship, and, finally, be on the verge of risking her life as punishment.

We can note that there are ethical adjustments in meanings, which are consolidated in lexical choices, re-elaborations of speech and reevaluations of meanings in social practices, always in pursuit of a dialogue with involving discourses, i.e., the discourses that are there. Such actions by the interlocutor render the discourses laden with underlying dialogic tensions, deeply directed towards the ethical retrieval of a displacement of meanings regarding the mistress. There are layers of meanings in the woman’s role, in search for an ethical agreement on the production and reproduction of what it means to be a mistress, as the following discursive sequence shows:

Sequence 10

INTERVIEWEE: I think we respect each other today, you know? We know there are couples who don’t respect each other.... men... women too, sometimes, when she knows the man is married, she doesn’t render accounts to him of her actions so much. So if she hooks up with another man, it is no big deal. Do you understand? That doesn’t mean that all girlfriends will do that, but I know some who do it, they just don’t care.

As we showed in our analyses herein, the girlfriend, as stated by the interviewee, is characterized as a homewrecker, and she engages in an extramarital relationship not only for emotional reasons, but also for the advantages the man – the provider – can offer her (cf. sequence 4). Another aspect of the analyses is the man’s control over his

⁶² Text in original: “as jovens deveriam aprender a controlar-se a si mesmas, distinguir *o certo do errado* de forma a conservar suas virtudes e a conter sua sexualidade em limites bem estreitos.”

girlfriend, which is perceived as a naturalized given. For example, the interviewee says that *there is the case when the man treats his girlfriend as the one who he can't go out with, can't have fun [...] just to hook up really* (cf. sequence 7), although she affirms such is not her case. The girlfriend also naturalizes men's polygamist feature when she indicates that *there is the kind of men who get used to this situation* (cf. sequence 5).

The ideology of unscrupulous homewreckers and advantage takers (PINSKY, 2017), which is attached to mistresses, permeates the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. In order to dissipate these judgments, the interviewee renamed and re-signified, ethically and discursively, her condition to one of a *girlfriend*. She did so from the beginning, in order to distance herself from the “condemnatory” judgment which would befall her if she referred to herself as a *mistress*. In the sequences analyzed, the girlfriend brings the voice of her interlocutor when she exposes the negative aspects which are socially and widely attributed to the relationship – that it is not right, that the girlfriend may go through an embarrassing situation, that the girlfriend can rarely rise to the level of wife etc. Thus, we consider that “discourse is social action: people are constantly creating the world around them, as well as themselves and others, in social practices in which they participate” (MOITA LOPES, 2002, p.93).⁶³

The purpose of this paper was to understand the discourse of a subject who is socially marginalized due to her love life, and the linguistic-discursive resources she uses in order to (de/re)-construct meanings that have been around for a long time – meanings that suppress and/or undermine the possibility of a new perspective. “When we construct our speech, we are always aware of the whole of our utterance [...]. We do not proceed from word to word; rather, it is as though we fill in the whole with the necessary words” (BAKHTIN, 1986, p.86).⁶⁴ Therefore, it is possible to understand the fluidity of the words in dialogic relationships, in attempts to re-design another's social practice and one's own practice. Accordingly, we could note that

Our practical everyday speech is full of other people's words – with some of them we completely merge our own voice, forgetting whose they are; others, which we take as authoritative, we use to reinforce our

⁶³ Text in original: “discurso é ação: as pessoas estão constantemente criando o mundo em volta delas tão bem como elas mesmas e os outros nas práticas sociais onde atuam.”

⁶⁴ For reference, see footnote 26.

own words; still others, finally, we populate with our own aspirations, alien or hostile to them. (BAKHTIN, 1999, p.195)⁶⁵

Outside dialogue, it would be impossible to recognize words.

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⁶⁵ For reference, see footnote 21.

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We hereby declare that both authors of this article have had access to the corpus of the study, participated actively in the discussion of the findings, and revised and approved of the process for preparing the final version thereof.

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