



Supremacist Linguistic Construction of Gender Narrations

Sergio Yagüe-Pasamón

Supremachist Linguistic Construction
of Gender Narrations

From conceptual representation to socio-political projection

ENGLISH IN THE WORLD SERIES

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to socio-political projection

SERGIO YAGÜE-PASAMÓN

UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA
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*If women did not exist
humankind would need to invent them:
it is always nice to have someone
to blame for disasters.*

Sergio Yagüe-Pasamón

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FOREWORD

Throughout my research work in the field of gender studies, I have had the good fortune to mentor or collaborate with numerous colleagues and students who are convinced of the need to continue to make visible the different realities and inequalities that women have historically suffered and continue to suffer just because they are women. Curiously, the only male researcher I have worked with in this area is Sergio Yagüe, and this fact has led me to reflect on many occasions on the need for more feminist men to contribute to consolidating women's achievements and not to take steps backwards in terms of gender and equality. For Sergio Yagüe is a true feminist, who has been observing the attitudes of men and women for many years, despite his youth; moreover, he has the ability to put into words profound reflections on facts whose transcendence may go socially unnoticed, since, unfortunately, there is still a great deal of normalised machismo. In his struggle to make palpable and not so palpable inequalities visible so that they can be neutralised, the author delves into the origins of many of the machismos and micromachismos, relating causes and effects in different periods and spheres.

I met Sergio Yagüe Pasamón in 2015 when I had the honour of directing at the University of Cordoba his Master's Thesis "Men 'Do' and Women 'May': Exploring the differing use of linguistic politeness in sex-groups from socio-linguistic perspectives", a prelude to his magnificent PhD Thesis "Vectorisation of male supremachist ideologies in high-outreach narratives and socio-political statism in Western contemporary patriarchies", which received the highest marks as well as sincere praise from their respective panels, not only for the author's research maturity, but also, unanimously, for his ability to identify linguistic and social realities that are not always placed in the showcase of academic or generalist studies and debates. There are

also numerous publications and contributions in the field of equality by this author, who has taken his message not only to national forums, but also to international ones from the United States to India, combining it with his commendable teaching work both in our country and at the Norges Teknisk-Naturvitenskapelige Universitet (NTNU) in Trondheim, Norway.

On this occasion, with *Supremachist Linguistic Construction of Gender Narrations: From conceptual representation to socio-political projection*, the author once again demonstrates his capacity for analysis through the study of various narrative forms that weave together, like a spider's web, the multidimensional social reality in which the construction of the gender role is always present. By giving solid arguments to his hypotheses and claims, the different narrative forms analysed in depth find an adequate fit and constitute a logical whole, always accompanied by a detailed social-historical contextualisation. The connection of the facts, events and narratives studied, which range from urban legends to popular animation series or the writing of news items that echo relevant current events, results in useful reflections on the human way of being and the consequences of our words and actions, leading to highly topical debates today, where there is still so much to be achieved in terms of equality.

Sergio Yagüe's proposal focuses, then, on traditional and contemporary narrative formats inserted in the context of the patriarchy that has governed the Western world since the first founding civilisations. All of them are a clear reflection, as well as a tool for perpetuating, the principles of organisation established around an evident gender gap.

Advertising, a genre that is undoubtedly a faithful reflection of culture and the social conceptualisation of gender, could not be missing among the audiovisual narrative formats that represent the otherness of the masculine and the feminine for the purposes of socio-political and ideological stratification. Thus, the author analyses in depth the sexist ideological symbolism in current advertisements for everyday consumer products, specifically food and hygiene. He studies advertisements for well-known and widely consumed products in Spain, such as the popular custard "Natillas La Lechera", or the "La Cocinera" saga of food products, as well as cleaning products such as bleach "Lejía conejo" or "Vileda Windomatic" squeegee mop, analysing the degree of fulfilment and satisfaction in the performance of tasks within the patriarchal conceptualisation.

Against this representation of real lives, he also dwells on the not always obvious influence of fictional genres on the social construction of gender. As an example of the codification and controlled channelling of ideas and feelings in this field, the author analyses the genre of animation series, exemplified in the popular *The Simpsons*, the longest scripted show in TV history, given its potential influence on the representation of gender roles through ideological vectorisation. His analysis of episodes such as “The Diatribe of a Mad Housewife”, where, through the figure of Marge Simpson, the scriptwriters dramatize the incorporation of women into public life through their work, is very illuminating.

Another narrative genre that could not be left out of this study is that of contemporary urban legends. These stories of timeless content transcend the frontiers of time and space, and achieve great spontaneous dissemination thanks to the verisimilitude of their facts and the interest of their complex structure and usual moral. The author of the present work studies examples in Spanish and English taken from the anthologies collected by Ortí and Sampere (2017), Camacho (2005, 2007), Brown & Flynn (2003) and Brunvald (1999). The cases analysed, especially Brown and Flynn’s (1999) “Chain Reaction” and Camacho’s (2008) “Secado Rápido”, are once again a faithful reflection of a traditional patriarchal vision that hinders and criticises the presence of women in public spaces, sustaining the paradigm of the necessary male figure who acts as a guardian and custodian to prevent the disasters of women’s ineptitude in the public sphere. A singular case that is studied in detail is the life story of Pope(ss) Joan by Hayes (2013), as a glaring example of the legitimisation of patriarchal organisation in the distribution of public roles in the contemporary Western world.

In turn, as an example of a written narrative format based on factual information, the author also takes an in-depth look at the news genre. Although it may seem that the news is inherently an objective account of events, in the intense process of elaboration, modelling and rectification by its editors, a very different product can be obtained to the one that should obey its definition. Thus, in many news stories, alongside the objectifiable facts, the opinions and conceptions of those who write and transmit them are interspersed and superimposed, impregnated with the ideological intentions that these communicators intend to convey to their recipients in a more or less consciously intentional and more or less subtle way.

Sergio Yagüe presents an analysis of the particular and opinionated interpretations of gender issues through the study of the news that arose as a result of a world-famous event broadcast live on television, specifically, the attack by the popular actor Will Smith on the host of the 2022 Academy Awards gala, Chris Rock. The author of this work analyses the news publications that emerged from this event in the American, Spanish and Portuguese press, and rightly reflects on the dangers of promoting and perpetuating reactionary ideals that reissue ancestral behaviours. The ideologised transmission of news can certainly contribute to the promotion of toxic models of masculinities, through the appearance of a mere presentation of facts and thanks to the immense capacity of today's media to reach a mass audience.

In the face of all these instances, Sergio Yagüe's work shows how it is still necessary to continuously denounce the representations that perpetuate the traditional patriarchal model and gender inequality. This work undoubtedly contributes to unveiling the supremachism embedded and underlying forms of narration that have accompanied us and continue to accompany us in our daily lives, shaping our perception of social reality.

For centuries, many women, even those unaware of the voice of their predecessors, have struggled to break down the bonds of gender. We must remember again and again, as Simone de Beauvoir warned us, that women's achievements and rights must never be taken for granted, because a political, economic or religious crisis will be enough to call them into question; nevertheless, each firm step will set the path, and the more women and men who walk the path of equality, the more difficult it will be to retrace it back again. There will continue to be ever stronger footsteps and ever louder voices to show the world that, in many respects, *#SeAcabó*, *#It'sOver*. This book is an important step in the joint journey of men and women towards true equality.

In short, this work, the fruit of the deep well of readings that enrich the author's reflective capacity, abounds in the origins and consequences of the status quo in equality issues, and is an excellent contribution to gender studies, but also to sociology, linguistics and history. I am sincerely grateful to Sergio Yagüe for giving me the opportunity to approach this work, which shows the necessary capacity for analysis, sensitivity and perceptiveness at a time when, erroneously, it may seem that certain issues are already part of the



past. I am convinced that potential readers will have the same pleasant experience when reading this book and I encourage them to unite their steps on the joint path of the search for equality.

María del Mar Rivas Carmona
University of Cordoba

24 September 2023



DEDICATION

As I insistently highlight in the introduction to my compositions, which intend to constitute a firm commitment to the community and raise awareness on the structural deviation of the different, yet hardly changing, models of society we humans gather around, intolerance is one of the historical "pests" of the "political animal".

The conceptual recreation of a need for regression, exploited by a sector of society which is, inexplicably enough, terrified by the humblest glimmer of progression, creates tensions which prevent evolution in a desperate move not to die in a world where there is no fitting for the die-hard recalcitrant.

Just like a noose to a grounded hot-air balloon which longs to take off, the Western power apparatus of supremachist leans adds pressure as the seeds of hope for a sincerely democratising gender equality thrive in a world where sex, gender, sexual orientation or the existential detachment from the supernatural, not to say fantastic, realm of certain creeds, cannot be accepted as factors to legitimise a recreated inferiority to the monolithic mainstream forces.

Unfortunately, regression, as a catalyser for statism, emerges in crucial moments when humankind stands on the edge of the precipice to a paradigm change. The fall of the Western Roman Empire, in 475 CE, the decay of thirty to sixty percent of the European population to the Black Death, the fall of absolutism or the French revolution probably offered an omen to the (meta)physic apocalypse.

The revolutions to the living conditions to the planet, such as the French Revolution (1789) or the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840), also brought social discomfort and fear, which triggered mobs and, in the case of the latter, even social initiatives, such as the Luddites, to destroy the new inventions and prevent the inevitable progression from occurring.



Reactionary social contestation to feminism, tightly connected to ultra-right ideologies, is to be understood, yet not tolerated, as a response to the winds of change. As the Arab proverb, which has inaccurately been attributed to Cervantes' Don Quixote, defends *مدققت كل فاقلا نكل ، حبنن بالكل* (the dogs bark, but the convoy moves on).

In this process of revindication of the female, as a fully capable actor for the fruitful progression of human communities, I would like to express my gratitude to Antonia Sánchez Macarro and Juan José Martínez Sierra, who trusted me for the elaboration one of the little pieces of the promising puzzle "English in the World" collection constitutes. This opportunity allowed me to discover a magic combination of hard work, professionalism, care and affection, even when the body aches and you need a rest rather than attending the affectional and intellectual needs of an eternally grateful new-born writer.

My thankfulness extends to María del Mar Rivas Carmona, a living incarnation of the humblest all-terrain superwoman, who I sincerely aspire to be one day. Octopus-like professional, committed brain and a warm humane heart. Thank you very much for being a part of my life, despite of the never-ending rush hour you live in.

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A mis padres Chari y Juanjo, por estar en los días más felices de mi vida y, sobre todo, en los que pintan más oscuros. A mis hermanos, de carne y de vida, por acompañarme.

A mis amores Lilly del Carmen, Katterina de la Puerta y Victoria de Hannover: apoyo incondicional y amor sin medida.

To my beloved Carlos, Laura, Anaïs (yes, you can!), Robert, Toril, Kjell, Celia, Raquel, Alberto, Rosana...

To Bulderland's staff, specially to Diego, Jesuda, Irene and María, for enlivening the writing of the pages to come, which I hope will provide long hours of pleasure.

Introduction

The book intends to serve as an overview to the existence of a mass-scale presence of highly indoctrinating supremachist ideological precepts in current human landscapes. Such an overtly biased approach to the world and to the positioning of human individuals within the artificial structures generated by the overdeveloped social facet of the species would build on sexual dysmorphism as the base to stress the difference between the man and the woman.

1

Supremachism, from ideal design to indoctrination

Before proceeding, I would like to make a categoric but necessary note. In this monograph, I decided to coin the term “supremachism”, a blending between supremacism and Spanish “machismo” (male chauvinism).

Not to be confused with male supremacism, I opted to represent the reality around the debated gender breach with the term “**supremachism**” because this concept befits the **ideological stand** that defends male supremacism, while **male supremacism** itself would refer to the socio-political disadvantage **resulting** from it. In the end, neither every man is male chauvinism, nor do all realisations of male chauvinism stem from men.

A sector of men, like me, may be positioned in a certainly privileged circumstance by definition (including recognition, salary-related perks, etc.) but, far from endorsing these unfair trends, fight for a structural change which requires, in first term, awareness raising of the lack of balance in the two main groups that inevitably constitute humankind.

The contrastive categorisation of certain individuals against the others has usually been deployed with perverse purposes, which are discovered to be recurrently oriented at the attribution of both



obligations and perks that create some sort of rigid castes. The nearly automatic classification of subjects within a community by means of a general set of basic circumstances which cannot be escaped by the affected citizens does, intrinsic dangers embedded, effectively cast a sense of determinism which conditions every person's living circumstances.

In the context of the patriarchal establishments, which have governed the Western world with iron fist since early foundational civilisations, the deployment of traditional and contemporary narrative formats will be discussed to have ultimately contributed to the endurance of their supremachist organisation principles through the creation and maintenance of a conceptually recreated gender breach.

The creation of representational axioms with socio-political repercussions is a complex process which deserves readers' active attention, in order to raise awareness of the practically ubiquitous attempts to persuade, convince and manipulate which surround individuals in almost every social environment of daily life. For a conceptual artifice to become a tangible reality, any given ideal must be translated into a verbal representation.

An arbitrary combination of graphic symbols into words that are visually recognisable by the corresponding target audience will shape up the concept to convey and impose. Immediately after, the symbolic recipient, which was denominated by linguist Saussure as "signifier", would be filled with the image the recipient is to evoke in the addressees' minds, which Saussure defined as "signified".

Once the image-word correlation, to be referred as "sign", is ready to exist outside the mental schemes of the original user, the ideological artifice to impose as a reality requires an adaptation to the social, political and cultural environments where the ideal concept is to insert. The foundation and legitimisation of specific ideological narrations has historically resorted to religion, as the interpretative mechanism by excellence to explain the phenomena which fell beyond humans' understanding, to avail the ineffable.

From divine issues, which would involve the origin of life on the Earth or the afterlife, to physical phenomena, such as the flawed inquisitorial theocentric sense of the universe, religion has created a narration to fill the epistemological gaps left by the lack of adequate scientific knowledge on the environment.



The governing socio-political operativity dynamics, such as the prevalence of the male over their female counterparts across the different models of hierarchical organisation of communities, is, for certain, no exception to this phenomenon. As later elaborated in this book, the diachronic salience of the man in the Western world is theorised, by the Catholic church, to emerge from the will of the Christian God, who would have appointed the male human as its predilect creation to implement the godly plans for the human species and the life in the planet.

Interestingly, the result of the process of ideologisation, as observed in the illustrative case of male supremacism in western civilisations, evidences the potential of the verbal narrative construction to create and impose artificial realities which did not exist by themselves before their ideal manufacture. Both inside and outside humans' complex minds, language has an unrivalled ability to create, alter, distort, hide and, even, destroy realities.

2

Narrative formats as a harmonic ideological panoply

As discussed in this monograph, the narrative artifices that come to existence with the assistance of language and become efficient operators in the shaping of the community, may appear to work as independent entities which alter very particular aspects of reality.

Not to mention real academic papers, research on gender studies has shown a remarkable tendency to deal with the emerging scopes of supremacist indoctrination as stand-alone phenomena to place under the spotlight and denounce for a later awareness-based dismantling. However, the concomitance of narrative constructs with different formats but the same basic representational projections on men and women may reveal to befit just different sides of the same coin.

In *Supremacist Linguistic Construction of Gender Narrations: From conceptual representation to socio-political projection*, the surveyal of the potential encodings of gender unequal ideological perspectives, as oriented to the alterity portrayal of the male and the female with socio-political stratification purposes, will be performed by means of the study of a wide variety of narrative formats.



The historical and contemporary implementation a multilayer panoply of narrative artefacts may well be equated, for illustrative purposes, with a spider net. In this structure of animal design, a series of axis converge into one single master focal point where the yeast of the ideological stance to be ornamented rests.

Just like in the case of spider nets, the desired ideological precepts are sawn into the formal framework of the text to set a trap to the unsuspecting preys that lurk around, where the predator will plant its eggs for the endurance of its essence.

The aforementioned analogy may just have caused, understandably enough, a wry face of disgust in a sector of the readers of this monograph, and even a feeling of arachnophobia in those readers who may be scared of these often-inoffensive creatures. However, it shall (hopefully) facilitate the understanding of the multi-source ideological trap that threatens the moral integrity of the average consumer.

While it may preliminarily seem evident, the existence of a diverse set of narratives establishes a dynamic of proportionality where the potential success of any propagandistic campaign is nearly completely conditioned by users' exposition to the corresponding text.

2.1 MULTIBAND EXTENSIVE OUTREACH AND ITS ROLE IN IDEALS IMPOSITION To these regards, one of the factors that determines the chances for the success of any indoctrination attempt is the multiband extensive outreach of the combined body of narrations with similar communicative intentions.

With mere illustrative purposes, the picture above intends to show the operativity of the multiband extensive outreach to the overall indoctrination of a micro-sociopolitical community of three members.

In the illustration, the subjects (A, B and C, from left to right) have access to several entertainment products on a regular basis, either daily or weekly. "A" keeps updated with her friends' routinary lives by means of the famous social network Twitter. Likewise, "A" devotes three hours a week to play *Bioshock infinite* in her recently acquired Nintendo Switch. "A" does barely spend time reading and decided not to buy a television.

On the contrary, "B" appears to spend a lot of time exploiting his hobbies. "B" exhibits a clear inclination to introversion. Therefore, "B" has never considered opening a profile at a social network.



Alternatively, “B” socialises with his acquaintances through in-game chats. Lately, “B” has been playing the remastered edition of *Resident Evil 4*, which he devotes, on average, half an hour per day. “B” sister loved a novel by Esme Delacroix, so she exhorted “B” to read it. “B” devotes two hours per week to this activity. Before going to sleep “B” watches television. The time spent varies from day to day.

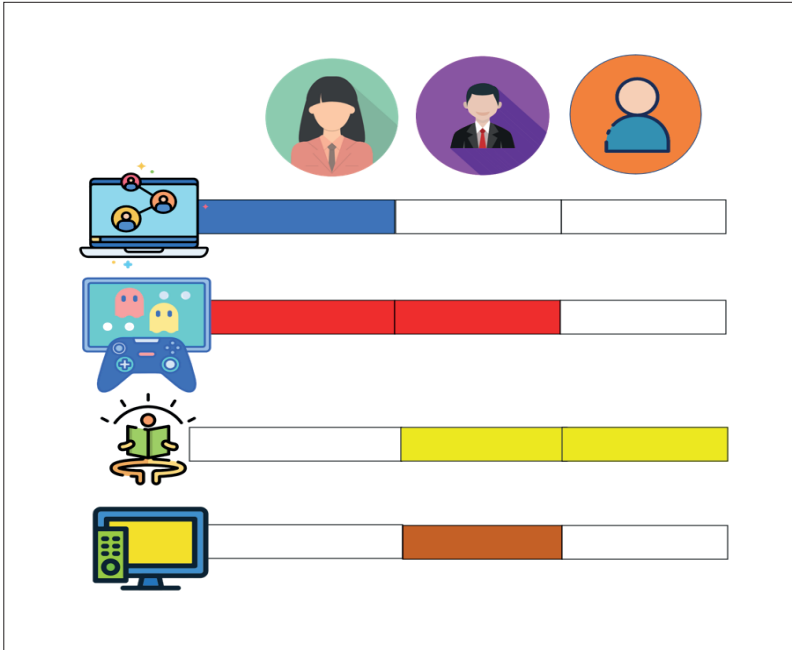


Fig. 1 – Simulated multiband extensive outreach in penetrating narrative formats

As for “C”, his=her demanding life circumstances do not permit her=him to enjoy as much free time as he=she would like to. Her=his relatives often say that “C” is a bookworm. They are somehow right, as he=she reads several books a week. That takes long daily sessions of reading, as you may guess. Currently, “C” is reading *Why Men Don’t Listen and Women Can’t Read Maps*, one of the “sacred scriptures” of male chauvinist flat stereotyping.

When observing the consumption trends of “A”, “B” and “C”, readers shall realise a basic difference in the variety of leisure resources the three of subjects resort to. In terms of brute ideological



potential, the highly loaded free time activities in “B” routinary life offers, in quantitative terms, many opportunities for one-way ideological transmission. In his multiplatform leisure panorama, “B” may receive gender-biased stereotypical images from videogames, literature and television. “A” may also be persuaded to adopt the male supremacist views encoded in social network interactions and videogames. Interestingly, the indoctrination of “C” would, in first term, depend on the persuasive quality of the reading input she=he, as it constitutes the only medium for ideologisation in his=her pastime environment.

Consequently, it might well be asserted that the richer the indoctrination input of an individual is, the greater the likelihood of receiving an adequate indoctrination stimulus, which I denominated in this monograph as extensive outreach.

2.2. EXPOSITION RECURRENCE: IDEOLOGICAL ADOPTION BY REITERATION The second factor that may restrict or foster the potential enrooting of narrative-conveyed ideals is exposition recurrence. The widely acknowledged popular culture is recognised for its wisdom on the mechanics of human communities across time, but not exempt of supremacist inspired encodings.

In particular, the proverb body in major-use modern languages, such as Spanish, reflects on the convincing effects of insistent messages. Even when the message itself violates Grice’s maxim of quality, which prescribes speakers to only express information that is known to be true, in order to be conversationally collaborative (Brown University, 2017; Spector, 2013), the Spanish say “*una mentira mil veces repetida se convierte en verdad*” (that is, “a lie repeated one thousand times is turned into truth”) confirms that the amount of times individuals are served a given ideal reality, which paradoxically may not be real, is essential in its adoption by the addressee.

From a scientific perspective, the pedagogist Bandura (1977) reflects on the weight of reiteration as a basic mechanism for learning. When referring to reiteration within Bandura’s Social learning theory

Another situation where the readers of this monograph may easily perceive the perlocutive effects of the phenomenon previously described would be political campaigns. While Allen and Stevens (2018) defend that “the accuracy of political ad claims, the visuals and the sound of ads” do have an impact on the voting trends of



citizens, Scott (2022) argues that the main issue of Italian electors at 2022 General Elections was, indeed “separating the truth from the lies they read online”.

When referring specifically to the far-right Frateli d’Italia candidate, Giorgia Meloni, Scott (2022) highlights that “more than ninety percent of the pledges from the country’s political parties were not rooted in economic reality”.

The endorsement of the population to the extremist corporation was later confirmed by accounts elaborated by Di Donato, Wedeman and Mortensen (2022), who reported Giorgia Meloni swear-in as Italy’s prime minister.

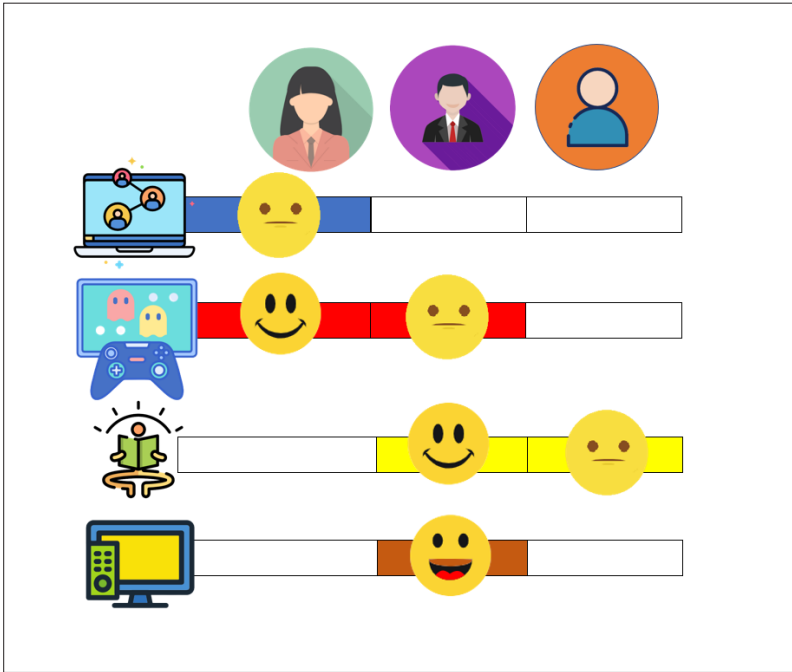


Fig. 2. Simulated ideological potential of exposition recurrence in multiple narrative formats

In the specific case of narrative-based gender ideologisation, the quantitative variable of exposition may be certainly significant for the overall acceptance of supremacist precepts as a truth, as availed



by the reception of the same basic pseudo-informational load from a variety of sources which mutually reinforce.

An individual like “B” is said to have experienced from a first person perspective the disastrous consequences of the liberation of the menstruating woman from a private space confinement in *Bioshock Infinite* video game, witnessed the destruction of the male-created anthropised city landscape when narrated Brown and Flynn’s (2003) “chain reaction” urban legend, and watched the natural positioning of the female at the private sphere for the satisfaction of her supremacist providential housewife assignation.

The recreated need to confine the malevolent woman to the private sphere of the house to protect society in the three narrative formats depicted effectively favours the displacement of the female from the indoctrinated individual’s own initiative.

3

What can readers expect from this monograph?

In this volume, both the multiband extensive outreach and the exposition recurrence to a series of traditional and contemporary narrative formats are studied. The dynamics which derive from such phenomena permits to survey the mechanisms that guarantee male supremacism and embody a univocal symbol of socio-political statism, in current Western patriarchies. Likewise, the gender tensions that derive from the unprivileged situation women are subject to, both representatively and factually, may be discovered upon the contemplation of multiband extensive outreach and exposition recurrence.

Throughout the book, the variety of formats to explore will discover to constitute a firm panoply of ideological artefacts which bombard citizens in this peculiar model of status quo. Therefore, a consistent focus on the complementary role of these ideal-to-real instances of designed fictions will be highlighted.

Consequently, the examined narrations will be treated as elements within a fairly harmonic composition, rather than as stand-alone realities, which is the traditional approach of the scientific literature on the matter.

In chapter 2, “Human history and gender inequality: un indissoluble marriage”, a succinct review to the history of the human species will be performed to study the fitting of gender inequality,



as a principle of socio-political structuration, in the first settlements of the primitive humankind. The basic organisation of the “political animals” from the past into would have played a fundamental role in the survival of the species amidst a demanding natural environment where the former us did not count on the commodities we rely on nowadays and often struggled to attain an adequate survival. As explained in the chapter, a horizontal approach to society befitted collaboration as the pivotal point of inter and intrasex interaction for the satisfaction of the diverse tasks in a sedentary model of society where the background setting was not to be changed upon the exhaustion of close-environment resources to be fulfilled. In this perspective to community management, the biological dimorphism will be presented as the key for the exploitation of the biological talents of each gender, rather than as a hierarchical system where the ideologically recreated importance of each task was manipulated into a legitimisation of the right to attain supremacy.

In chapter 3, “Tracing the purple footprints: the postmodern path to current gender inequality”, the convulsive twentieth century in a European continent at the verge of massive destruction under the rise of the forces of fascism and Nazism is explored as a milestone in the feminist fight. As elaborated in the chapter, the unprecedented situation of emergency forced the patriarchal status quo to loosen the hardcore control on women and break the previously inviolable confinement of the female to the private sphere. The efficient incorporation of women to the vetoed public professional spaces would have breached the ideological safeguard of supremachism, which led to the concession of rights to the women who were to be relegated to the home once again. While rights served as catalyser to enhance the unprivileged women’s living conditions, it will be discussed to account for current gender inequality in the western patriarchies.

In chapter 4, “You do well at home: the housewife recognition in television advertising narratives”, the prevalence of the traditional, gender-based, role attribution in marketing audiovisual narratives is examined, as a phenomenon which operates specifically within the framework of the supremachist establishments in the first quarter of twenty-first century. As elaborated on, the maximal adherence of the social actors to their respective gender roles depends partially in the presentation of the providential assignments of the patriarchal establishment on both sex groups as natural. The choice of idyllic stereotypical figures to aspire to with representational purposes



would foster the embracement of the desired gender-specific conceptualisations. The clear-cut delimitation of the contribution to society by men and women will be discovered to be exhibited in real-life situations individuals may find themselves involved in. For the strengthening and consolidation of the models legated by Franco's National Catholicism, men are recurrently represented in the fulfilment of their role as mothers and wives, who take care of their families by processing food to provide suitable nourishment to her sons, daughters and husband, cleaning up the private environment to enhance their safety and comfort, and taking care of the clothes they will use in the public sphere.

In chapter 5, "The woman, the old and the bad: ageism in urban legends", the atemporal and peculiar urban legend will be discussed to viralise, through specific mechanisms which are not present in other explicit literary genres, the representation of the need to confine and supervise the old woman, as the representation of the multiply disabled female at the crossroads of gender and elder age inferiority. The prophylactic lockdown of the woman would be justified on the ground of the community wellbeing. Indeed, the lockdown of the woman in the private sphere would not merely befit an efficiency-related decision for the ergonomic operation of the Western contemporary human community. The displacement of the female collective from the centres of power would suit, according to the male chauvinist standards, the need to prevent the pernicious consequences of a female human's actions. Thus, women's performance, who is approached by the neoplatonic system of values and believes to be naturally incompetent and both physically and ethically inferior to her male counterpart, is counteracted.

In chapter 6, "The free-range woman and the twilight of the civilised landscape", the urban legend is ambivalently explored to warn against the consequences of an inefficient female custody at the private sphere of the house. The consequent incorporation of the female in the public spaces traditionally reserved for men, namely the religious organic structure, the political management and the professional environments. As discussed, the so-defined intrusive behaviour would considerably amplify the severity of the female pernicious effects in the different areas of the establishment. In this narrative environment, even seemingly naïve actions of a woman in the male anthropised skyline are presented as an evitable omen of the destruction of the male-led civilisation.



In chapter 7, “The sacred territory is no woman’s land: the urban legend of Popess Joan as female-oriented warning tale”, the incorporation of the man into the vertical structures of the Catholic institutions, which integrates one of the pillars of the male power in the Western world, as legitimised by the Divine providence, is presented to account for an unbreachable perk, in accordance to the godly designs on the natural order of creation. The rupture of this sacred will by the subversive human who may dare to contradict the redeptorist plans for humankind would constitute a sacrilege to be punished with the capital penalty. The dramatisation of such a supremachist belief is examined to incarnate in the legendary figure of the Popess Joanne, who subverts the established order of the catholic church and faces an exemplary punishment by the patriarchal power apparatus.

In chapter 8, “Stereotyping from tender age: the professional female muting”, the *Simpsons* animation series will be reviewed to study the deployment of serial audiovisual narratives as a platform for the characterisation of women as naturally disabled writers. Such a representational resource would be oriented at the reputational exclusion of women from the male literary cannon and their silencing to prevent the subversive denunciation of their disadvantaged circumstances. The traditional silencing of women by the custodian husband, who replaced the dependent woman’s will expression by imposing his own as extensive to the wife, has served as an unrivalled instrument of control to cast a shadow of opacity on the unprivileged life circumstances, rendering them virtually inexistent. However, the impossibility to explicitly silence women in current Western democracies, where expression is deemed as a universal right, will be explored to be compensated by the conceptualisation of female writing, which integrates a major medium for the voicing of their inequality-based denunciations, as a subversive source for system-weakening male conflicts.

In chapter 9, “He did it for a reason”: laundering reactionary masculinities in news”, the manipulative construction of news is examined to be deployed, by the governing patriarchal ideological stands, to launder the lamentable exhibition of brute force performed by Smith in the 2022 Oscar Prizes’ gala. To these regards, journalism may be observed to sort to journalistic and extra-journalistic professional criteria to legitimate Smith’s intolerable actions, in an attempt to mask violence under the veil of love, respect and the providential duties to be fulfilled by men, according to the neoplatonic godly will.



In chapter 10, “Toxic masculinities with a global antenna for mouth and influencer hands”, the existence of broadcasted models of traditional, controlling and violent masculinities will be observed to forcefully channelise the voice of the female in public spaces, and their potential repercussion in the audience, who may replicate undesirable interactive conducts by procedural observation. In particular, the immediate access of the contemporary Western population to the pseudo-reality offered by live television and streaming platforms is observed to provide a direct access to the ideological loads encoded in them. In this context, the simultaneous events at television, streaming platforms and video repositories are discussed to have allowed a historically unprecedented global outreach of the toxic masculinities inspired by the Hollywood movie star.

The monograph will be wrapped up by a reflection on the overall vectorisation of ideological effects by means of the narrative formats detailed in the book. Such a compendium will permit readers to get a general picture of the functionality of these fiction-design resources in the statism of Western contemporary patriarchies.

In this sort of photograph, readers may discover there is an evident tension between the female group who aspire to attain a sincerely democratising equality and the male group in power, who is determined to maintain the privileged position legated by the previous generations.

Finally, a series of documentary resources consulted for the elaboration of this book, which I would personally recommend taking a look at, is included.

Human history and gender inequality: an indissoluble marriage

1

Gender inequality as criterion for the structuration of human groups

1.1 THE EQUALISING PRIMITIVE COLLABORATION FOR SURVIVAL Gender inequality, as a modality of interaction between members of the human species which currently lays under the spotlight of current debates, is far from being a recently emerging phenomenon to be covered by the sociological sciences. Indeed, it may be theorised that gender inequality has structurally integrated one of the principles for the gregarious organisation of the human species, which is essential for its survival through cooperation for the resolution of the problems presented by a hostile natural environment.

Merrily enough, the readers of this book, who I, as writer, will be eternally grateful to for their inquisitive attention, may enjoy the monograph, page after page, in a safe place. The existential security (Barber, 2012), to be later discussed in this volume, is currently permitting the detachment of first-world citizenship, under the reign of scientific epistemology, from the explanation of the intangible supernatural and metaphysic. Thus, a steady displacement of the omniscient supernatural entities which are religiously believed to govern with an unquestionable redemptory iron fist, is occurring.

Such a dynamic may undeniably be surveyed, at a first glance, through the observation of the basic readers' living circumstances. Either resting in a comfortable sofa, sitting in the public transport on the way to meet friends or laying at the beach, readers may find themselves in an innumerable variety of situations where they can



enjoy these lines. By contrast, the lack of a coordinated response in a wilderness that is nearly impossible to conceive by the average population in Western contemporary patriarchies was, in all likelihood, the synonym to a crude death.

The necessity for the protohuman species to organise into rudimentary models of community, which would revolve around the exploitation of the organic advantages provided by the sexual dysmorphism, does *not* mean that gender inequality is either necessary for the appropriate development of the human species or consubstantial to its occurrence. However, it may well be asserted that male chauvinism, as a form of socio-political structuration, has been historically systemic. This factor would come to account for the reasons why the transformation of hierarchical communities into horizontally leaning models of society, in the sein of advanced Western contemporary democracies, implies an absolute community revolution with deep ideological, social, political and interactive entrails to explore.

Collaboration for survival, which would not be an option, but a necessity may be believed to have favoured, in early human communities, the fluent imposition of an efficiency-based task division. The goal of this approach to society operativity would be oriented at the performance as groups with a wide range of action when it comes to the fulfilment of protection, food and goods provision, processing food, cleaning, dependent caring and spiritual life.

To these regards, the aforementioned biological dimorphism (Rogers & Mukherjee, 1992), which favours a sex-based difference in the male and female body for the suitable consummation of reproduction, gestation and maternal baby care, could have been deployed to exploit the corresponding strengths of the main two sex groups.

According to this logic, all those activities which involved an intense physical factor, including animal hunting (Ember, 2020), materials transportation, the defence of the group from the wild fauna or the building of funerary sculptures would have been assumed by men, on the ground of their great muscular anatomic design (Hewlett & Macfarland, 2010).

As opposed to men, women would have been granted the ability to gestate the progeny and legate the genetic information to the upcoming generations, for both the endurance and the enhancement of the species across time.

In order to ensure the suitable up-bringing of the new members, women could have been designed with a peculiar personality



configuration that might have inclined them to express maternity through their inclination to emotionality, empathy and sensitivity towards both their descendants and other dependent members of the community who required similar care, such as the injured or the elders.

Thus, proto-human communities may be believed to have operated under the principle of horizontal collaboration, where male and female tasks would have been equally vital for the progression of the species. To these regards, there is no apparent hints which may lead researchers on anthropological matters to conclude that verticality would be, by itself, a natural model of organisation to the gregarious nature of humankind, provided the community's reliance on both initial male and female duties.

1.2 COMMUNITY COMPLEXITY AND THE REPUTATIONAL PRIORISATION OF THE MALE Notwithstanding the aforementioned equal importance of the male and female contribution to the group, the immediacy of the effects of the male group defence and food collection in the everyday survival of the community might be theorised to be the starting point for a mistaken prioritisation of the male over their female counterparts.

Unlike the reputation associated to the men-led contribution to society, the generation of the descendants may be approached as a long-lasting process. In fact, the unclear repercussion of descendance generation, in a context where perinatal mortality was stratosphere-high due to the poor hygienic conditions and the inexistent medical assistance, would blur its operativity under the shadow of uncertainty, when it comes to its functionality in the endurance of the community, as the materialisation of a natural mechanism of biological ethology rather than an assigned responsibility.

The socio-political consideration of the man as functionally superior and, therefore, holder of higher relevance within the community would not solely stem from the manipulative distortion of the ideological conception of the male.

1.3 THE GOVERNING CATHOLICISM AND THE SOCIAL PROJECTION OF A NEOPLATONIC FOUNDATIONAL VIEW OF THE WOMAN In fact, spirituality and religious sentiments, which would be studied by Dupré (1975: 302) to be consubstantial



to humankind, would have played a major role in the creation and perpetuation of the gender breach, as a historical pillar of the governing male social forces. In the context of the Western world, the strong integration of creeds into the organs of power, has its own name and place: the European Catholicism, which still integrates the epicentre of the alluded major branch of Christianity.

In the particular case of Catholicism, the origins of its adhesion to politics are to be traced back to the fourth century Rome, where Emperor Constantine the Great imposed his beliefs to the very last corner of the vast territory of the Roman Empire (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023^a). Interestingly, the decay of the Roman Empire was not a firewall for the dissemination of its faith, which became the ideological source of legitimisation for the King's absolute power during feudalism, and the feudal strict hierarchisation, as a manifestation of the godly providential will. Likewise, the foundational principles of Catholicism would justify, from its religious interpretations, the political supremacy of the male social actors over their female equivalents.

The biased views of the female, as diametrically opposed to the man, imposed by the Catholic church as the historically governing religious power in the "Old Continent" until the protestant reform and its subsequent scission in 1517 (Harvey, 2022), is to be traced back to the very origins of the male leaning creed.

According to Frattini (2010: 8), the Judaist Christianity is, in its foundational basic principles, intrinsically chauvinist, with a remarkable lean on the conceit of the female human. The secondary place of socio-political relevance to be occupied by women across history would reproduce, in the Christian Sacred Scriptures, the roles of the "ideal" Adam, designed to the Christian God's "image and likeness", and Eve, a derivative human product who was not directly created by the divinity, but from God copy's ribs.

Thus, in a sort of twisted "broken telephone" game for adults, the first female would be a low-quality, deformed, imitation of the *Dei opera*. At this point, readers may be concerned with the progressive loss of quality resulting from successive reproductions of an original product. Interestingly, such an ideological conception would not only portray the female as an utterly derivational by-product, deformities embedded.

Instead, the generational dynamic described would establish a subtle, yet clear, ranking, where the divinity holds a head position, not to



be contested. The man created by the Christian God, as an animated Golem with freedom of will to satisfy the designs of preternatural “cosmic watchmaker”, would work as an extension of the supreme rector in flesh. At the last step of the hierarchy, the morally inferior copy of the man would pose a constant battle to manipulate the male providential leader and reach, thus, the socio-political supremacy.

The moral deviation of the distorted male product would add on the recreated physical and intellectual inferiorities of the woman, who ends up, according to *The Holy Bible*, turning the first man against its redeemer, by disobeying the creator’s express prohibition on eating apples from the paradise tree, and condemning humankind to a life of suffering, pain and disgraces for the rest of eternity.

The belief on the intrinsic purity of the man would also materialise in the conception of the major religion on the prescriptive organic structuration of its institution, the Catholic Church. According to best-seller *The Holy Bible* (Oxford Bible, 2009), the evangelising mission legated by Prophet Jesus Christ initially organised around his own figure, who carefully selected twelve apostles (Bissel, 2017) to disseminate his teachings and invited his followers to follow the example Jesus Christ reportedly incarnated in his life. In the primitive project of Christianity, as a sort of malevolent tradition which survives to current times, no room has been previewed for the fitting of the female sector of society.

Such a simple, two-step, vertical organisation would have transformed, as the creed expanded, into a multilevel hierarchy where believers would be ranked into, depending on their level of immersion into the pursuits of the institution. The only relevant trace of female figures in Jesus Christ’s intimate environment would be, indeed, represented by two stereotypical women, who embody, respectively, the acceptable and the contemptible models of women, to promote and socially reject.

On the one hand, Saint Mary would stand for an obedient and abnegated mother who preserves her virginity intact and exhibits an exemplary life which responds to the expectations of the patriarchy on ladies. At the other end, the Neoplatonic prism that approaches women as a naturally sinful creatures, who follow despicable lifestyles based on the corruption of the male by means of sex, would be incarnated by Mary of Magdala. The second element in this equation, as readers may be familiar, integrates the most famous worker



of the colloquially referred as the oldest occupation in the history of humankind (Salmon, 2008).

In a faithful reproduction of Jesus Christ's official choices, the Catholic Church's quest to bring the "Kingdom of Heaven" to humanity accepted no female participants, as evidenced in the papacy, the supreme governor of the Catholic creed and "infallible" interpreter of the godly will (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2023b), which is to be occupied by the male elected Bishop of Rome.

Currently, from apostle Pope Peter to Pope Francis, 266 governors have occupied "the throne" of the Vatican (McGreevy, 2022), and, as reported by official sources, none of them would be a woman, provided their exclusion from the vertical hierarchy of the institution, which is solely entered by means of male ordination.

Hence, a parallelism is to be observed between the historical segregation of the woman from salient positions in the religious realm of the public sphere of the Western world and the systematic displacement of the female to the private sphere, as achieved by the afore-discussed implementation of the gender-based task division, which would be mutually reinforcing mechanisms oriented at the maintenance of the gender breach.

Thus, as theorised by Lakoff (1975) in her theory on the separate spheres, women would be reiteratively excluded from all forms of socio-political interaction in public spaces, being their expression restricted to the private sphere.

1.4 THE GENDER-BIASED SALVIFIC LEGACY OF THE CREED The ideological prioritisation of the male tasks over their female counterparts' contribution to the community would be, in the context of the growing complexity of human societies, a catalysing force in the transformation of the anciently neutral horizontal micro-community structuration into a vertical system where men's protection and goods provision for survival would serve as excuse for the assumption of patriarchal leadership across history.

The implementation of such an ideal recreated conception of both gender groups would prove effective throughout the Medieval Europe, the Renaissance and the Modernity, where the communities were strictly governed, in first term, by the absolute King (Peter, 1991), the male nobility and the high clergy, which was only accessed, by ordination, by religious men. Male prominence in government



would extend to participative organs of power upon the culmination of the late eighteenth-century French Revolution and its assault to the historical approach to absolutist government.

Both absolute and decentralised politics were ruled by the intrinsically gender-biased system of values of Catholicism, which erected as the ethical and moral regulators with deep influence in individuals' private and public life. Catholic ethics retrieved *The Bible* (Oxford Bible, 2009) bipolar representation of the vicious sinner, lustful and corruptive woman, as diametrically opposed to the virtuous man designed by the Christian God to continue his work and preserve creation. Thus, the male and the female would unquestionably be fixated to the spaces devised by the male chauvinist establishment in an unequal dynamic denominated by philosopher De Beauvoir (2015) as "alterity".

2

The contemporary age and the end of the supremachist infallibility

Such an illiberal community structuration would be in force until mid-nineteenth century, when Seneca Falls Convention (History.com, 2022) first addressed, in a public space with socio-political repercussion, the default ostracism of women in the Western world by the mere fact of being randomly gestated under double-X chromosomal configuration.

Such an unprecedented event would commence a process of reflection which would redound into the concession of female suffrage and granting of universal rights. As a culmination of this process, entitlements such as political eligibility, right to work (Nuñez, 1993), ownership, joint custody or abortion would be granted to women, at different paces in Western nations, across twentieth century.

Notwithstanding this, the partial, incomplete conquests in equality matters still demands the action of the ongoing third feminist wave. This movement for equality perseveres in its fight to neutralise the gender breach and attain a close-to-equality status, for the creation of an actual democracy which is not feasible unless individuals are provided an equal treatment, no matter their personal background or circumstances.

Tracing the purple footprints: the postmodern path to current gender inequality

1

The world conflicts and the rupture of professional male exclusiveness

The natural history of the human species can retrospectively be approached as an endless marathon of war movies. When put together, the unceasing series of conflicts that lifted historical figures, merged nations and caused civilisations cease to exist offer an account of power unbalances which explain the current socio-political configuration of western human communities.

The fierce dynamics of domination and submission at macropolitical level, where hegemony is highly disputed in a context of global interdependence which leaves no room for autarchies, create disturbances with a potential to resonate with the very internal structuration of any given human society.

To these regards, the World Wars do pose an illustrative example of the impact of supranational politics in community structuration. Multiple advances were witnessed to occur in the Western world throughout the convulsive twentieth century, where some of the greatest socio-political crises threatened to alter the distribution of power between leading and thrusting nations.

In a lapse of thirty years, the “Old Continent”, a colloquial denomination to refer to the European continent which served as a cradle for the classic civilisations, became the battlefield for the two salvage global conflicts that posed the need to reconsider the national and supranational organisation of traditional human communities.

The unnecessarily bloody first half of the twentieth century created a rupture on the ideological consistence of the traditional task



distribution, which sustained the patriarchal establishment throughout history by condemning the different social actors to either constriction or immobilism. The categorisation of individuals, which formerly followed sex as the only criterion for the attribution of the prescriptive duties to fulfil, was covered by a recreated sensation of naturality which abruptly decayed at the onset of World War I. At this crucial moment, the home-confined housewives and mothers were forced to leave the private sphere to maintain the regular operativity of the United States, United Kingdom and France when male professionals were summoned to face their enemies upon the outbreak of World War I, in 1914. Among all the contributions women made to the victory of the “allies”, the female would have facilitated the duty at the front by manufacturing ammunition. As recalled by National Records of Scotland (2023), the “munitionettes” also referred as “Canary Girls”, supplied the “raw materials” for the world-scale offensive.

By mid-twentieth century, the victorious United Kingdom and France, and the defeated Germany, and Italy, along with the rest of the countries which accidentally served as setting for the two World Wars, were inevitably forced to reconstruct the devastated Europe, both physically and politically.

The urge to minimise the possibilities of global warfare to further occur stimulated international association. Hence, organic structures at supranational level were created, including the original project of the then-to-come European Union, by the 1958 signature of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) Rome treaties.

The promise for a non-bellicose world would also entail the necessary democratisation of societies. The failure of the male chauvinist establishment to prove the veracity of its long-consolidated argumentative need to relegate the female to the performance of house chore and family care duties, due to women’s natural shortages to lead and work, revealed as a flawed axiom. As forcefully evidenced by the previously discussed incorporation of women to professional life during the World Wars, who had to fulfil men’s former duties while they fought for their country at the front, men held no providential abilities to govern or work.



2

The breach of the male paradigm as the female door to rights

2.1 ENTITLEMENTS FOR THE POST-WAR WOMAN AT THE WINNERS' SIDE Such a breach in the governing male ideology would progressively lead to the revolution of women's life conditions, which are asserted by Larumbe (2005) to integrate one of the greatest changes in the century. Indeed, the recently victorious United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland approved its *Representation of the People Act* (UK Parliament, [1918] 2023a) at the last stage of World War I, which modified the formerly restricted suffrage to include women from their early thirties.

Such a measure was the introductory step for end-year regulation on female representativity in the land of the Anglo-Saxons. Specifically, ten days after the official capitulation of the world conflict, the legislative at Westminster Abbey approved *An Act to amend the Law with respect to the Capacity of Women to sit in Parliament*, which was abbreviated as *The Parliament (Qualification of Women)* ([1918] 2023b) and offered legal coverage for the political eligibility of women. The American head of current Western capitalism also enacted specific regulation to acknowledge a series of female rights that were to come nineteen centuries late. Among the substantial adaptation of the die-hard supremachist legislative framework, the *Nineteenth Amendment* was passed on to complement *The Constitution of the United States*. In its text, the aforementioned regulation did not positively grant women an entitlement to suffrage but expressively prohibited the denial of the right to vote to any citizen on sex grounds.

3

The rise and fall of female rights: the Spanish exception

Another spearhead as for the early recognition of female rights in the "Old continent" was Spain. The Hispanic country at the Iberian Peninsula did, in fact, revolutionised society with the advent of the Second Republic (1931-1939) and placed the Spanish woman in the map by opening a door in the confining four walls of the house, where women were trapped by the patriarchal expectations made axiom.

The most significant initiative for the equalisation of the treatment to be provided to citizenship with no sex-based restrictions pertained



the Republican Constitution, which previewed no privilege for individuals due to sex, social class, wealth or political ideology due to the intervention of the celebrated deputy and writer Clara Campoamor (Sánchez-Cabezudo, 2021).

The political realm of the public sphere would not be the sole front where the patriarchal male exclusiveness breached for the first time in the human history. The professional development of the female in public spaces was facilitated by specific labour-oriented regulation. The related legal framework fostered the protection of the working woman which comprised the 1931 maternity law or the preservation of work upon marriage, as guaranteed by Decree of December 9th, 1931 (Estarlich, 2018). Notwithstanding the advances on this matter, the eight-hour labour shift, along with the improvement of overall workers' living conditions, left aside the majority of the female labour force, as domestic service was excluded from the legal coverage provided (Hernández Sánchez, 2021).

Conquests were also achieved, during the period, in suffrage matters, as recalled by Mora Cabello de Alba (2019), by permitting the political eligibility of the woman, even if universal suffrage was rather a male matter.

The emancipation of women from their husbands was also possible, yet partial, as guaranteed by 1932 divorce law, which permitted a dissolution of unhappy marriages that the Catholic Church defended to be against the law of its divinity. The concession of entitlements to the disadvantaged woman did not only contradict the Vatican institution with regards to divorce. The first woman minister of Europe, Margarita Montseny, implemented the first abortion law in Europe, which had been created by Catalunya's regional government, in all the territory that still remained under the republican rule during the first stages of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), as discussed by Campelo (2014).

3.1 THE FRANCOIST HOME IMPRISONMENT OF THE FREED SPANISH WOMAN Despite the overall optimistic tone, and yet not exempt of criticism, on the advances of gender equality in the first decades of twentieth century, the multiple socio-political situations in a devastated and fragmented Europe had negative repercussions in political stability of the nations. The fragmented socio-political panorama of the "Old Continent" was nothing but the



breeding ground for the inclination of certain regions to the appropriation by absolute rulers, as guided by their megalomaniac longings.

According to Besier and Stoklosa (2013: 1), “the moral decline of the population” and the systemic economic crises in the post-war period would have catalysed the appearance of a “Europe of Dictatorships”, as materialised in the residues of the decayed fascism which survived in the political biomes of Spanish Franco and Portuguese Salazar’s tyrannies. Hence, the Iberian Peninsula, and former leader in gender equality matters, would keep impermeable to the advances contributed by the feminist fight until late twentieth century.

By way of example, the feminist movement would not have found, in Spain, a fertile socio-political panorama for its enrooting until the political transformation of the country in mid-1975. In fact, the imposition of the National Catholic movement, as the regulator of the ethics of the country from a neoplatonic approach, posed a reactionary involution. The regression would be especially blatant for a country which had previously led the recognition of female rights in the globe, during the Second Republic period. In this shady panorama, women were forced into an education which induced them into a life of abnegation, family care and toxic dependence on the man.

The fight of the Spanish woman in the civil war, beside being forceful to cope with the exceptional circumstances, was a chant to the protagonist, yet unequal, positioning gained by the female during the “grand opening” of society to the formerly relegated. The struggle of the fight woman not to be deprived of the entitlements which could foresee the first steps of a bright democratic perspectives was, much to the detriment of human rights, the anticipation of four decades of reactionary regression.

As denounced by Robles (2023), the immediate reaction of the rebel Francoist apparatus upon their successful coup d’état, which concluded the Spanish civil war in April of 1939, was the detention, torture, raping and assassination of women due to their gender condition and their ideological orientation. According to Gómez (2018), the accusations of criminality, alcoholism, psychopathy and sexual degeneration were common arguments for the imprisoning of those Spanish women who resisted to their confinement in the private sphere. He, as journalist Gómez (2018) defends that the living conditions that awaited the so-called rebellious female were to be



just as crude as those experienced by the overall population during the civil war. Brutality, of all sorts, was commonly exercised against women (Morant, 2006; Moreno, 2007)

After some years of hardcore repression, the effects of the “ideological’ eugenics on the post-war Spanish population, which approached assassination as a resource for the neutralisation of the politically deprived citizens, were to be complemented by the fear to express freely and an officialist education to return Spain to its former patriarchal “glory”. As reflected by Balinot (2019), the branch of the power apparatus in charge of the indoctrination and the paternalist education of the Spanish woman was “the feminine section”. The department responsible for the ubiquitous ideologisation of women by means of television, radio, literary and educational propaganda shaped a prescriptive female view of society and reality, and built on the mass of conservative women who fought against the Republican progressivism (Prada, 2008).

Since their tender-most childhood, the prospective women were given access to the “poisoned” gift of gender-based learning, which would naturalise the female service to their brothers, father and future husbands as the providential duty of the National Catholic woman. Hence, women would be attributed a rather assisting role oriented at the satisfaction of the desires of the male leaders and the procreation of the species (Fuller, 2012).

The maternal provision of prospective patriots that could contribute to Franco’s plans for the Iberian country was essential for the continuation of the autarchic system. Consequently, the caretaking of the dependent members of the community, until they would be in condition to perform as educated in society, was a central issue for the dictatorship to control.

The legal framework on falangist education, which was headed by 1945 *Ley de Educación Primaria* (that is, the Primary Education Law), imposed compulsory training, from six to twelve years, in domestic economy, maternity, puericulture, house chores, along with the transversal religious and political teachings (González, 2009).

The integral indoctrination of the female wrapped up with the “female social service” (Añover, 2021). This feminised version of the male military service demanded women to exhibit their ability to serve their families with the demanded skills and an adequate load of abnegation.



Remarkably, this propagandistic resource of the Francoist power apparatus, with evident social structuration purposes, managed to outlive the absolutist regime which created it.

Indeed, the female social service endured the decay of the national catholic dictatorship, which officially ended with the death of the coupist Francisco Franco, on November twentieth of 1975 and the crowning of Juan Carlos I two days later. Eventually, *Real Decreto 1914/1978, de 19 de mayo, por el que se suprime el Servicio Social de la Mujer* (that is, Royal Decree 1914/1978, of May nineteenth, by which Woman's Social Service is abolished) voided such an anachronic figure, which did not have any validity outside its reactionary male supremachist context.

3.2 THE DEMOCRATIC RESTITUTION OF THE RIGHTS DEPRIVED In spite of the little attention received by the female fight during the transition from Franco's dictatorship to Juan Carlos I's parliamentary democracy, in order to compensate for the entitlements lost upon the imposition of Francoism in late 1930s, the third feminist wave proceeded to reclaim sexual and reproductive freedom, as recalled by Toboso (2018).

Progressively, the Spanish 1978 Constitution (*B.O.E. España*, 1978), in article 14, recognised universal equality before law and freedom from discrimination no matter individuals' personal circumstances, being complemented by 1981 divorce law (Larumbe, 2005).

The dissolution of marriage, as a social entity with micropolitical repercussions, which permitted the emancipation of women from the husbands they formerly depended on, would be further complemented by the depenalisation of abortion in special cases of rapture and life-threatening medical conditions, as implemented by Organic Law 9/1985, of July 5th, which reforms article 417 bis of the Criminal Code (*B.O.E. España*, 1985).

In parallel, the sex-specific curricular designs which had been directed by the National Catholic movement of the regime to educate men and women differentially for their prospective assumption of the roles delimited for both sex groups by the traditional patriarchal establishments was ultimately abolished upon the approval of the Organic Law for the Regulation of Right to Education (*B.O.E. España*, 1985).



The efforts of the Spanish population to catch up with fully democratic societies in few decades, in gender equality matters, shall not be underappreciated. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the country is still immersed in a feminist revolution which pursues the creation of an integral legislative framework on equal professional opportunities and the prevention of gender-based violence, which has found in the last progressist government a significant momentum.

“You do well at home”: the housewife recognition in television advertising narratives

1

Recreated accommodation and socio-political statism

Socio-political comfort is, with most likelihood, one of the pivotal factors when considering the immutability of human structures.

The existence of a governing sense of fulfilment and stability shelters individuals from the intrinsic dynamicity of an ever-changing world. However, it may be severely pernicious to evolution, as it could significantly contribute to dissuade the catalysers of social change from being implemented upon the emergence of restlessness. A population who deems its physical and emotional stability satisfied by the community where they dwell do not actively seek to attain sufficiency in a hostile environment.

Quite the opposite, those humans who are exposed to a structure of existential instability are, either motivationally or forcefully, encouraged to intervene in virtue of the satisfaction of their personal aspirations and promote their living conditions to higher standards.

Hence, the recreation of a sense of conformity, either on faithful or rather unfounded grounds, would play a major role in the endurance of the Western supremachism and its unequal units for socio-political organisation.

To these regards, community support and recognition, as related to the adherence to any given role, action or stance, would reveal as central elements for the nullification of potential distress of any sort.



2

Power dynamics in calculated television marketing

When the sense of satisfaction which is summoned for the dissuasion of subversive thoughts is specifically applied to the relegated female, the modality of advertising based on television and streaming broadcasting platforms may reveal as a powerful social control “artefact”.

As a narrative format, these short-lasting audio-visual texts offer appealing daily life stories with a remarkable narrative concentration which offers a load of familiar locations, coherently placed together in a master plot which guides audience’s attention, and expectations throughout their ephemeral stories.

The consumers’ aforementioned degree of familiarity with both the unimportant problematics depicted and the environments where spectators perform basic duties in their corresponding existences facilitates user-character identification. Such an identification is a prior stage to the extrapolation of the values incarnated by characters to the audience’s own conceptual schemes. Additionally, there is a noteworthy pursuit to the complicity of the narratees, which would be oriented at the trading-conditioned befriending with the target audience.

As a basic mechanism in the overall ideologisation campaigns, which will recurrently be discussed to serve gender indoctrination purposes throughout the chapters of this book, metamessages play a quintessential role. Such a verbal resource, which was first studied by renowned feminist linguist Deborah Tannen (1998), appears to perform socio-political stratification effects by means of the exploitation of subliminal implications which derive directly from speech. These effects may, more often than not, be complemented with the assistance of communication proxemics, which refers to the modality of affectation of interpersonal interaction that is based on corporal postures, gestures and dynamism.

In the particular case of advertising-led complicity, the narrator is frequently integrated by an off-voice. Its role in the piece of marketing is to take sides with the spectators and recommend products and services which would provide solutions to undeclared previous issues suffered by the narrator. While not necessarily explicated, narrators suggest the familiarity with any given issue and exhibit their eagerness to uninterestedly help.



3

The relevance of television as a medium for ideologisation

Recent research by Hassan (2018: 1) validates the “small screen” as a highly penetrating medium with the faculty to manipulate the mind of the audiences exposed to it, attributing to television an ability to fake perception in the consumers. Hassan (2018: 2) denounces its potential to shape beliefs, values and the typology of interpersonal interactions to be established by the audience with their social environment.

In fact, the permeability of the audience to the male chauvinist encodings of audiovisual marketing, as broadcasted by television, would be particularly aggressive at the turn of 2020s decade. As claimed by Navarrete (2018), TV ideal loads are effectively conveyed under a scheme of marketing non-stop bombardment.

According to Jaff (2015), visual marketing and advertising model society to the desire of the producers of this peculiar instrument for indoctrination. Dan (2011) would take such an assertion a step further by making reference to such marketing formats as the most dynamic and influential factor in the public opinion. Infants and teenage consumers would be an exceptionally vulnerable population profile, following Hanley’s (2000) criterion, to the indoctrinating effects of these propagandistic formats.

4

*The pernicious impact
of supremachist advertising in consumers*

The general concern of the deployment of sexist advertising, and its harmful effects on the audience led to the European Council to issue a warning, in 2013, on the effect of media to impede or hinder structural progression towards gender equality. The effects of sexism in television, which were studied by Proper, Stickgold, Keely and Christman (2007) would be analogic to other narrative formats, such as videogames. In this interactive textual format, the presence of inappropriate contents is documented by specialised literature to have redounded into the arise of negative collateral for their users, both especially vulnerable and regular adults (Stermer & Burkley, 2015; Dill, Brown & Collins, 2008; Isbister & Nass, 2000; Deskins, 2016; Waubgeshig, 2016).



Similar preoccupations are expressed on the extended presence of gender-biased perspectives in Spanish contemporary television advertising, as denounced by the Spanish Observatory on Women's Image (Instituto de la mujer y para la igualdad de oportunidades, 2014). This association calculated the quadruplication of sexism in television publicity campaigns only from 2013 to 2014, from 144 to 605 investigation proceedings. On the contrary, Presol (2019) discussed the progressive growth of this format for male chauvinist ideological enhancement since sexist television advertising would have been the motivation for nearly two thirds of the total advertising formal complaints.

The impact of television advertising, which is asserted by Orús (2020) as the currently major medium in the "Hispanic Iberia", may be justified by its daily consumption trends in the country, estimated by Orús (2020) in three hours and forty-five minutes in 2019. The recurrent exposition of the audience to television marketing would have been unprecedentedly intense in the recent years, as accidentally enhanced by the global health crisis caused by SARS-CoV-2 pathogen, which would have hindered the traditional, face-to-face, interpersonal interaction trends, as detailed by Yagüe-Pasamón (2020).

The practical nullification of the traditional scenarios for verbal exchange would have led to the vehiculation of communication into virtual means with prophylactic purposes, as exposed by Yagüe-Pasamón (2020). The crude confinement of the Spanish population, in application of Royal Decree 463/2020, of March 14th, by which the State of Alarm is declared for the management of COVID-19 crisis (*B.O.E. España*, 2020), transformed television into a refuge. The appliance gained, thus, an ambivalent operativity of serving as source of the information of the population amidst the uncertainty of the unedited situation and instrument for the evasion of citizens from the fear to the invisible, but lethal, enemy.

5

Television fitting in Franco's National-catholic propaganda

In order to understand the influential faculty of television advertising campaigns, it is fundamental to assess the circumstances which facilitated the integration of the "small screen" in the American



aftermath of World War II. US men who had faced the horrors of the armed conflict recurrently found themselves in need to evade their miserable reality, while women, had proved their competence to assume tasks previously reserved, with ideological purposes, to men. However, the latter were forced to occupy their traditional secondary positioning in their house imprisonment. The service of television to both men and women in the tackling of their respective adjustment disorders guaranteed its erection as the unrivalled twentieth century entertainment medium and one of the most salient sources of public opinion influence.

The longing for freedom of all the sectors of the population who had been brutally repressed after the Nazi-aided triumph of Francisco Franco and his army of rebels against the democratic Second Republic, in 1939, became a truth after four long decades of food rationing, misery, hardcore Catholicism and censorship (Robles, 2023). The Franco-centred domination of the citizens would have been particularly crude for republican activists, communists, women (Nash, 2006, Álvarez, 2014), homosexuals, and, essentially, every person who could trigger the paranoid thoughts of a power apparatus who believed, unceasingly, Spain to be the target of a communist, Jewish-masonic conspiracy.

The decay of the dictatorship, upon the death of the tyrant, officially notified on November twentieth of 1975, would lead the way to the transformation of the State Chiefship to a monarchy headed by the Bourbon grandson of Alfonso XIII of Spain, who anticipated 1936 disaster by leaving the country under the rule of dictator Primo de Rivera in 1923, before the King's inability to govern the country.

Such a conversion was certainly slow and only affected the most salient institutions, as evidenced in the deep integration of former relevant figures of power in the political life of the country. For example, Fraga Iribarne, Minister of Information and Tourism, in charge of censorship, during Franco's dictatorship was later appointed by Bourbon king Juan Carlos I as Government Minister and Vice-president of the Cabinet of Ministers in 1976.

Other Francoist Ministers such as Martínez Esteruelas, Silva Muñoz and López Rodó founded *Alianza Popular* along with Fraga Iribarne, the political party later renamed as Partido Popular in 1989. Thus, social agents from Francoism led the country fifteen years out of the forty-five years of democracy hitherto.



The die-hard, recalcitrating and fascism-inspired Francoism could provide an explanation for the actual motivation behind the adoption of television in the mid-50s, the golden age of advertising. Far from being an arbitrary decision or a perk to calm down the tension the Spanish population was being subject to, the new appliance at the Spanish homes may be discovered to operate as an ideological instrument. Consequently, television would integrate within the already existing indoctrination panoply deployed by the tyrannic regime led by Franco, which holistically pursued to support the doctrine of the National Catholic Movement.

A radical, practical application of the Christian Neoplatonism became, thus, one of the governing principles of the Spanish tyrant's absolutist socio-political status quo, where men were the public and private authorities and held control of perks, properties, and resources. By contrast, women depended economically on men and performed as housewives, abnegated mothers of extensive families and satisfying wives at the entire disposal of the desires of their husbands.

Such an ideological trend would fossilise and reach every corner of the system with long-lasting effects through the compulsory schooling in a primary educational system based on a differential curriculum (González Pérez, 2009). According to this design, which instructed boys, the prospective leaders of society were instructed in languages, maths and science, while women would be taught to be the perfect housewife and sacrificed mothers in charge of upbringing the future patriarchal leaders and serving their husbands (Mayordomo, 1999, Álvarez-Uriá, 2013).

The marketing campaigns launched in the then newly adopted appliance would play a quintessential role in the indoctrination goals of the patriarchal Francoist socio-political establishment. Thus, television would come to complement the regime's control on the social doctrine, as achieved through gendered education (Borraz, 2015; Gil & Gómez, 2014), literary works, radio programs and newspapers. Such indoctrinating resources were used as antennae for the ideological selected values, by means of a prior censorship, which filtered those messages with a potential to permeate and transform society.

Notwithstanding the slow, yet certain, progression of the process of democratisation in the country, in the last decades of the twentieth century, the advent of the democracy was certainly tolerant as for gender equality (Larumbe 2005; Cabello, 2020). Formerly, the feminist fight had not been totally detained by the totalitarian regime but



was forced to continue its quest for the achievement of gender equality from clandestine positions. Feminism was commonly punished, upon its discovery, with imprisonment and, even, the capital penalty, as in the case of “Las trece Rosas”, thirteen young activist women shot dead upon their questionable accusation of assassinating a Civil Guard officer (Cebrián, 2021) adscript to the Francoist Information Service and Military Police (SIMP by its initials in Spanish).

6

Advertising regression in a progressing Spanish society

After thirty-nine years of repression, the room offered by the parliamentary Monarchy for the reactivation of the feminist movement, as an active force for the complete consolidation and conquest of the equality which characterises democracies (Toboso 2018). Such a trend is appreciated in the numerous laws approved in women’s rights realm, from 1978 constitutional acknowledgement of gender equality before law, in article fourteen (*B.O.E. España*, 1978b). Another crucial rights restitution befits Law 45/1978, of October 7th, which modified Spanish former Criminal Code articles 416 and 343 for the decriminalisation of contraceptives prescription and use (*B.O.E. España*, 1978^a). Finally, it is worthy to note the 2023 Organic Law 1/2023, of February 28th, which modifies Organic Law 2/2010, of March 3rd, on sexual and reproductive health, and the voluntary interruption of pregnancy (*B.O.E. España*, 2023), to name just a few.

However, it may be noted that twenty-first century Spanish advertising may have failed to reflect the progression of society in gender equality matters, provided its contribution to the endurance of the traditional view on Spanish society promoted by the Francoist National Catholic movement. As previously discussed in this monograph, National Catholicism’s views, as the radical, practical application of the Christian Neoplatonism built on *The Bible* conception of men as the predilect creatures of the Christian God, made to its image and likeness to lead society from a privileged position. Likewise, it imposed an approach to women as dependent social actors to assist the family and their husbands with abnegation (Balnot, 2019).

According to the narratives recurrently established by means of contemporary TV marketing in the “Hispanic Iberia”, which have previously been detailed to hold a never-to-dismiss influence potential



on the small screen users, women's range of action in the Spanish society, as a representation of the current Western patriarchies, is delimited, according to male supremacist precepts, to the private sphere of the house for the traditional housekeeping and family service duties.

The contemplation of the deployment of television-based, audiovisual, advertising in twenty-first century Spain discovers the existence of reminiscences from the Francoist National Catholic moral filtering in major food and hygiene corporations in the Spanish industry.

The stance of this profile of advertiser towards gender equality and the positioning of men and women in current Spain's society might be of relevance due to the tacit endorsement these companies rely on. The economical support provided by a solid sector of consumers, in the most pessimist scenario, implies that buyers do not show a rejection for the values represented by the product and the audiovisual messages they convey in their marketing campaigns.

At the end of the day, the choice of a product over its alternatives in the market does imply, up to a certain point, the consumers' adhesion to its specific advertising narrative. It shall not be ignored by the product users that the purchase of the good entails an indirect financing of the company's mission, vision, and values, as manifested by the pieces of advertising designed for own representation. Such an identification between the system of values of the consumers of a product and the corporation of choice has been previously studied by Zhang, Sun, Liu, and Knight (2014), who make a connection between the emotional component of advertisements and their customers' purchase intentions.

6.1 THE FEMALE COOK PROVIDENTIAL HERITAGE IN A CONCILIATION-DEMANDING LIFE In the context of Western contemporary patriarchies, Spanish television advertising are discovered to make an ultimate contribution to the presentation of the private sphere as an environment of comfort and safety for the current woman in the "Old Continent". The structural positioning functionality of Spanish television marketing, which aims to endure the confinement of the women in the house for the performance of house chore tasks, would be exploited by two major consumption sectors.



On the one hand, ready-meal product publicity would resort to the traditional conception of the woman as the responsible for the processing of the food provided by the man. Far from being an archetype from the modernity, the attribution of cooking to the female individuals at the micro-sociopolitical units integrated by families shall link back to the protohuman communities. Long before humankind left behind its wandering lifestyle, one of the tasks to be performed by the ancient man was to retrieve the wild edible resources from a crude natural environment which preyed the then hominids.

The rather external tasks attributed to the man would suggest that cooking, which has been recently discovered to go as far in history as 778 000 Before Common Era (Burakoff, 2022), fell among the list of contributions the female made for the endurance of the community. Despite the massive evolution of human, both as an animal species and as a social entity, the predominance of the woman at the kitchen has forcefully maintained nearly intact until late twentieth century.

The private-setting cloistering of the female cook in the Western modernity has been evident in the erection of the woman as the “queen of the home” in the American Cold War society. Such a representation could respond to an attempt to milden the female reluctance to return to the house after the end of World War II, or the previously discussed education of the woman to be the perfect housewife in Franco’s tyrannical regimen.

The surveyal of food products advertising as analytical focus for the revelation of a potential existence of male chauvinist ideological precepts would be of paramount importance, provided the proneness of marketing to summon the figure of the perfect housewife, which would integrate a sort of leitmotiv, in the presentation of women as a social agent with a restricted range of action.

The weight of Nestlé, as an international corporation, and the Spanish trademark “La lechera”, a component in Nestlé’s constellation of food for human consumption trademarks, enhances the repercussions of the ideological encodings embedded in “La lechera” advertisement.

The relevance of Nestlé in the international corporative panorama is ensured by its presence in 194 countries, where 447 factories produce goods for supermarkets and businesses all over the world. The importance of the corporative firm in Spain is further availed by the data offered by the company’s 2021 yearly report (Nestlé España S.A., 2021a), which declares revenues of 2145 million euros.



Additionally, the corporation asserts to provide labour stability to nearly 4100 workers.

In recognition of its contribution to the food industry, Nestlé has been granted the 2021 “Innovación” prizes (Nestlé España, 2021b) by the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fishing and Feeding to sustainability, for the investment of 17.2 million euros in the construction of a deposit which deploys the grounds generated as collateral residue in the elaboration of soluble coffee for the obtention of water vapour. Likewise, the trademark received “Innovación” prize to innovation, for the design of the first vegetarian condensed milk in the market, “La Lechera” Veggie, to facilitate the access of new consumer trends to dessert-making. Other prizes which show the relevance of the company would include 2019 Randstad Award for the most attractive enterprise to work for in Spain (Restauración Colectiva, 2019).

Specifically, ready-meal products publicity would rely on a bipolar intergenerational confrontation between the different models of stereotypical women that emerge diachronically, which carry embedded certain contrastive traits for the effective identification by television advertisements consumers with the plain set of values they all embody.

On the one hand, conservative women are typically represented by one or, frequently enough, a collective of old hypercritical women who scrutinise, in a sort of court of judges, the actions of their descendants. The alluded elder women are specially concerned with the treatment young women provide to their legacy, which cannot survive immutable in a world under constant transformation, in spite of the resistance conservatism offers.

At the other end of the intergenerational tensions recreated by the TV marketing product, young female figures would stand for the renovated approach to the world. These modern women adapt progressively to the contributions of the contemporary times to the improvement of living conditions with the necessary flexibility while avoiding a neglect of the caring and assisting duties assigned by the male supremacist status quo.

While the passing of the time did manage to lead Franco’s dictatorship to its end, with the expiration of the absolutist ruler, in late November of 1975, the ideological instrument integrated by the National Movement remained impassible to the democratisation of the country. Interestingly, Spanish advertising appears to preserve the patriarchal, National Catholic conception on the social actors,



which currently holds a remarkably reactionary character, thanks to the advances contributed by the twentieth and twenty-first century feminist fight.

Natillas “La lechera” would stand out as a representative product within the trademark and the very same food industry of the country, as one of the oldest products in the brand and one of the first format of non-homemade custard desserts, which adds relevance to the analysis of the ideological encodings conveyed by means of their television marketing campaigns. Specifically, in Nestlé España S.A (2019) advertisement displays a young cook in action, who prepares custard in a sort of inn under the scrutiny of other stereotypical social actors with interesting attitudinal loads.

Young women’s adaptation to match the ever-changing world, in the contemporary Spanish television advertising would come down, among its most relevant manifestations, to the innovative insertion of precooked food. In twenty-first-century Spanish society, the high demands of social, family and responsibility conciliation require time-economising resources for the female not to be exempted from their traditional house chore tasks. The providential female assignment must be fulfilled, in first term, before they may get a limited and disadvantaged access to the public sphere, in an attempt to complement the husband’s effort to keep the family unit economically solvent.

In Natillas La Lechera advertisement (Nestlé España S.A, 2019), the intergenerational conflict between a young innkeeper who prepares and serves custard to her clients, and a committee of criticist old women, resolves when the representative of traditional cuisine tastes the custard. The equation of the custard quality to the elder women’s constitutes a representation of an intergenerational transference of powers where women’s traditional role at the kitchen is confirmed to prevail in the young innkeeper.

The second advertisement environment where prepared food products will be explored, in pursuit of the potential discovery of dramatised views which stereotypy female social actors as housewives and mothers of the community offspring is La Cocinera, which may be translated as “the female cook”. This Spanish ready-meal food company, founded in 1959, offers a wide variety of cannelloni, empanadillas, croquettes and nuggets.

The importance of the ideological stand promoted by the trademark, as its own, stems from its corporative identity. La Cocinera was a



satellite of Nestlé macro-corporation until 1999, when it was sold to Findus, the main trader of frozen meal goods in the south of Europe, according to the data provided by CincoDías (2015).

Some years after the incorporation of La Cocinera to the major frozen food enterprise group, as reported by Marketing news (2008) portal, La Cocinera would make an attempt to modernise their original image, dating back from the late 1950s. The recently adopted iconic image would permit a univocal identification by consumers from other competitors in the same market area.

The renovation of its logo was an invaluable opportunity for the company to dispose of the National Catholic consideration of the woman as the universal cook and adapt to the twenty-first century democratic context. However, it was rather utilised as a resource to confirm and renovate the presence of the woman in the private space of the kitchen, where the female is to perform the assigned duties by the traditional patriarchal establishment.

The compromise of La Cocinera with the gender-based compartmentalisation of society into public and private spheres is further reinforced by combination of the iconic female cook with the trademark motto “*me gusta comer en casa*” (i.e., “I like to eat at home”). Such a setting befits the place where women are to fulfil their food processing duties for the appropriate nurturing of their corresponding family units. The surveyal of the subscription of the trademark to the supremachist precepts may be particularly explicit in the advertisement saga “*Abuelas Celosas*” (La Cocinera, 2017), a series of audiovisual marketing pieces for television where the figure of the female figure of reference from the previous generation is presented as the source of disruption.

The rivalry between the old woman and the current mother of the family revolves around a confrontation to remain as the only cook of the family. Such tensions would be especially prominent in the television advertisement “*Abuelas Celosas: Canelones ¡Como en casa!*”, which allows readers to check the attitudes exhibited by prototypical women towards the providential duty women have historically been forced to satisfy.

Specifically, the obsolescence of conservative concerns on the extended use of prepared meals would be embodied by the grandmother figures in “*La Cocinera – Abuelas Celosas*” advertising the saga. As a leitmotiv, these peculiar grandmothers criticise their descendants’ inadequate cooking skills, by denouncing “*No saben freír un huevo*”



y quieren hacer una lasaña” (that is, ‘they can’t even fry an egg, yet they intend to cook a lasagne’). Subsequently, another grandmother figure at the television spot laments the replacement of homemade meals by precooked food by asserting that she, as incarnation of the female cook, is needed in the family no more (“*Si está tan buena, yo en esta familia ya no hago falta*”). The exhibition of overemotionalism does not only hint at the female’s inability to rule, but also confirms their adherence to the providence assigned by the patriarchal establishment.

6.2 THE HOUSEWIFE PREPARATION OF THE FAMILY’S INCURSION TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN HYGIENE AND CLEANING PRODUCTS The second major area of Spanish contemporary television advertising where marketing may be prone to the unifocal presentation of house chores as a female attribution, by definition, would befit cleaning and hygiene. The performance of these duties used to integrate one of the main branches of the Francoist National Catholic curricular design for the then-girls and currently women with economic power to access these products in the market. Hence, the centrality of the role of the woman in the fulfilment of her patriarchal housecleaning assignment would reveal as the recurrent setting for the advertising of hygiene products.

The previous allusions to the National Catholic propagandistic apparatus in Franco’s autarchic dictatorship would serve as an illustrative incarnation of such a mid-twentieth century phenomenon. The reactionary way of life imposed by the military coupist upon the devastation of the rudimentary, yet progressist in its context, entitlement framework of the Second Spanish Republic (Campelo, 2014, Estarlich, 2018) had women as escape point for the pressures and frustrations of a tensioned society under the despotic designs of late fascism. In the pseudo-ideal project of society promoted in the “short and sweet” housecleaning advertising, committed women would foster the progression of human communities by implementing the gendered curricular design of the Francoist National Catholicism.

In these explicitly simulated spherified contexts, men are assigned the responsibilities deriving from a logical, cold-minded, rule of the group, as a whole, and the macro-sociopolitical provision of resources and community-level services. By contrast, women would play an assisting role in the promotion of happiness, satisfaction and rest of



their corresponding husbands, during the male temporal refuge at the private sphere of the house.

To these regards, bleach products have traditionally constituted a key product in the wellbeing and the safety of the family unit, provided its virucide and bactericide properties. These pathogens used to be lethal before the constitution of national health systems, which facilitated the general access of population to antibiotic treatments to previously uncurable conditions. Nowadays, bleach products enhance the living conditions of the members of the family, by preventing them from undergoing curable, yet discomforting, infectious processes.

In the particular context of the Iberian Peninsula, “Lejía Conejo” is, likely, the most relevant bleach trademark of the Hispanic country, where the product has served the Spanish families for 133 years, since its first launch in the market, in 1889 (ABC, 2014). Thirty-six years before the discovery of penicillin by Doctor Alexander Fleming at Saint Mary Hospital, in London, bleach was introduced in the Iberian country. The length of the trajectory of Lejía Conejo in the country would not only reflect on the diachronic evolution of the ethical perspective to gender from late nineteenth century to early 2020s decade, but also actively contribute to the shaping of the current conception of the female through advertising.

The study of the gender-oriented ideological loads of major bleach products advertisements will be performed by means of the study of “Lejía Estrella y Conejo - las numero 1” (Henkel, 2015) television spot, where the protagonist housewife will be discovered to exhibit a sort of expertise in the quality of bleach trademarks gamma for family care.

Such rewarding experiences may comprise the family’s affection and recognition of the mother’s contribution to society upon the performance of the assigned duties, as in the case of “Lejía Conejo” and “Lejía Estrella” bleach products. As an informal quality standard, Lejía Conejo and Lejía Estrella are selected by the mother as the most appropriate for the hygiene of the family among a big set of cleaning products.

Finally, advertising of non-fungible cleaning products, which lighten the burden of daily house maintenance duties, may be pertinent to check whether the correlation between women’s social actors and their portrayal as housewives is still present in Spanish twenty-first century television advertising. To these regards, Vileda is a German



cleaning equipment seller, founded in 1948, and with a considerable weight in fifty countries. Its enrooting in the Spanish population may also be deducted from 2019 revenues in the industry of the Southern European country, which are asserted by EFE (2019) to totalise 308 million euros.

In terms of representativity, Vileda Windomatic, a squeegee to clean windows and glass surfaces, is recognised by the company as its most popular product, as of July 10th of 2022 (Vileda España, 2022). Hence, the television marketing designed for the promotion of the product sales would be especially relevant for the surveyal of the potentially biased, gender-specific, ideological views.

Therefore, “vistas perfectas con Windomatic de Vileda” (Vileda España, 2015) advertisement has been included within the analytical scope of this piece of research. The performance of housecleaning duties may also bring self-satisfaction to the mother of the family, as seen in Vileda Windomatic ad (Vileda, 2015). In particular, in this piece of audiovisual marketing, a housewife uses a squeegee to clean large windows to reveal she is performing her duties at an orbiting spacecraft. The peculiar setting of the scene suggests that women can reach anywhere as long as they comply with the responsibilities attributed by the male supremacist establishment from their position at the private sphere.

Additionally, home cleaning advertising campaigns by Philips may be of ideological significance to check the potential replication of female social actors stereotyping by companies with a different corporative identity, along with their characterising mission, vision, and values. The presence of the former Dutch company in over one hundred countries, throughout its thirteen decades of history, until the discontinuation of activity in March of 2021 (Acosta, 2021), includes a solid incursion in the Spanish technological industry. In the Spanish market, Philips supplies technological devices of all sorts, from home appliances for family care and entertainment, to patient care equipment, such as assisted ventilation devices and oncologic radiation, to radiodiagnosis machines, such as magnetic resonance.

Specifically, Philips PerfectCare steam iron television spot (Koninklijke Philips, 2016), where children bring their own and their father’s clothes for their mother to iron, so they go spotless to their academic and professional lives in the public sphere.



6.3 THE EXTERNAL INTERVENTION OF THE MALE EXPERTISE IN THE FEMALE'S DUTIES Remarkably, the intervention of men in the operativity of the private sphere is limited to technical assistance, where men use their reputed expertise to provide solutions to the problems that impede women to perform their housekeeping tasks. This would be illustrated by Finish Abrillantador brightener advertisement (Reckitt Benckiser, 2016), where a housewife complains about her dishwasher malfunctioning and a male technician shows up, out of nowhere, to explain the logic behind the appliance failure and resolve the issue. Such a contrast between the image of the knowledgeable man and the housewife woman is further stressed by the concluding scene, where an overemotional housewife would irrationally hug her dishwasher for having mistreated it.

7

*Behind a great man, there is always
a great female preparation*

The specificities of the female attributions may be observed to slightly differ from ready meal to hygienic products marketing, leading to little alterations in the basic leitmotiv of the female house chores performer. Notwithstanding this, both thematic typologies would be witnessed to share common grounds, since they both depict *costumbrista*, daily-life, scenes where the stereotypical views on women focus on the housemaid by excellence.

Insistently, in these short narrations the female servant would perform, as educated by means of the gender-differential National-Catholic curriculum in force during Francoism, assisting duties within the house to ensure the appropriate nourishment and neatness of their currently leading husbands and the prospective leaders of society while they remain at the private family environment.

As a common factor in the two cases exposed above, it may be discovered that ready-meal and hygiene product industries would deploy audiovisual TV marketing to dramatise the everyday “adventures and misfortunes” of happy housewives. Remarkably, the overall joyful character of these prototypical ladies whose happiness stems from their compliance with the traditional attributions prescribed by the patriarchal status quo for female social actors.



Such an assignation would include, as aforementioned, family care, house cleaning and any other operation which may be necessary to accommodate the members of the micro-community family women belong to.

In addition to the listed hygiene-enhancing assistance, the preparation-oriented female duties would serve, once again, as a platform for other members of the community to perform non-maintenance duties in the public sphere of education, work or religious service. By way of example, the washing and ironing of clothes, which pursues the improvement of individuals' physical appearance during the fulfilment of their respective structural missions at the public spaces, could play an undeniable role in the shaping of the perceptions generated in the mind of any subject's interlocutors.

Despite the little attention paid by research to this aspect of the human as a social animal, there seems to be a global consensus on the existence of certain semiotic repercussions associated to appropriate dressing and look smartness. According to research conducted by Casablanca and Chacón (2014), dressing always carries a meaning and conveys relevant information about people's age, sex, ethnics, religiosity and the professional task to be performed. Such encodings, as the authors proceed, exhibits an attitude to the others, which involves essential power dynamics, such as sexual availability, energy, submission or economic status.

Hence, such an assumption may lead to conclude that the women-led preparation for other members of the family to intervene at macro-sociopolitical level creates resonances that pulsate deep in society, as the quality of the female duties' outcome may metonymically determine and condition the family reputation.

The woman, the old and the bad: ageism in urban legends

The assumption of women's providential role as housewives has been discussed to be presented by Spanish contemporary TV-based marketing as a source of pleasure and acknowledgement of the twenty-first-century Western woman. This resource, as elaborated in chapter 4, would respond to an attempt to persuade women to conform to their unprivileged circumstances for the maintenance of the gender breach patriarchal stratifications build on.

TV-ads may be regarded to pose an invitation for the current female spectators to satisfy the expectations on male chauvinism on them, both as individual and collective, with a series of remunerations to compensate lady-like behavioural trends. By contrast, other narrative artefacts are studied to insist, vehemently, on the need to confine and control the supposedly naturally incompetent woman for the common good.

Specifically, urban legends, stand for high-outreach narratives which exploit verisimilitude and purported authenticity from the narratee's close environment to emotionally urge them to warn their beloved and acquaintances about a potential threat. Thus, the story and the ideological precepts it contains are turned into viral.

1

Urban legends: where reality and the legend meet

With regards to urban legends, it shall be highlighted that the genre characterises by its partially hybrid nature, and their presentation formats may be expected to vary throughout its various realisations.



1.1 THE HISTORICAL PREDOMINANCE OF ORAL LANGUAGE FOR HUMAN COMMUNICATION Across time, orality has stood as one of the pillars for the progression of the human groups from proto-communities to highly-hierarchised societies. The relevance of oral communication is to be examined through the prism of technology and engineering, provided its role as the only recipient for the intergenerational transmission of popular culture, knowledge and the macro-sociopolitical units within human communities.

Before the creation of written formats, which offered stability to the information produced by any given speaker, so long as the interlocutors relied on a common code for the decoding of the message, word-by-mouth was not only the natural state of language. Indeed, it integrated the sole resource available for the channelling of communication, recurring to the addressees' memory to deposit the messages to the subsequently uttered.

Therefore, it may be asserted that every instance of prehistoric verbal interaction was based on orality, which permits to generate a fairly approximate idea on the dimensions of the phenomenon. In early history, the illiteracy of the "populace", composed by the majority of the population, who did not fully hold ownership on their own existence and whose deep ignorance limited their potential to enhance their living conditions, would have been central for the sustainment of the absolutist model of socio-political organisation.

Hence, writing is logically accepted to be an overall unavailable instrument for mass communication until the effective decay of the vestiges of Western absolutism and the nation-paced democratisation of writing at different points of twentieth century.

In the aforementioned context, orality would not only serve the purpose of establishing interpersonal communicational bridges. In fact, oral verballity, which is undeniably subject to an inevitable volatility deriving from the intervention of speakers' subjective decoding, interpretation and communicative intentions that may affect the message in every replication, would have been a necessary recipient for the implementation and legacy of the social conventions designed by the status quo. Such processes would be crucial, as set of guidelines for the acknowledgement of the various social actors who perform in the public spaces of the community and the rules of interaction and behaviour according to their artificial positioning within the community hierarchic scale.



1.2 THE BLURRY FRONTIERS OF THE URBAN LEGEND Among many other oral resources for the regulation of Western patriarchies, urban legend narrations could have been implemented to promote, by means of popular culture, an alterity-like conception of individuals where gender would define their traits and attributions in the community. Thus, gender specific perks and restrictions are delimited.

The contrastive perception of the male and the female would specifically translate into a systematic approach to men, with perceptible romantic hints, as virtuous, strong protectors of the weak. The inferior-conceived members of society would depend on them to survive the hostilities posed by nature and a cold mind to tackle potential trespassing from other individuals.

As placed at the other side of the mirror, women would be defined by their weakness and their emotional excess, which would predispose them to the physical protection of the male and their custody from their naturally vicious character and justify their confinement to private spaces for the satisfaction of the care of the progeny.

Even from a technical perspective, urban legends may well be deemed as a vaporous literary genre, sensation which extends from the format to the contents of the text itself. Indeed, the etymology of urban legends may result certainly deceitful to the expectations of their readers, provided its univocal reference to the traditional legendary accounts. Unlike urban legends, traditional legends would collate the adventures and milestones of heroic figures from a remote past, as achieved by their half-divine heritage and the powers legated, deep inside their then-unknown genetic code, by polytheist gods. Therefore, readers who interact with urban legends, for the first time, may be dissuaded to believe they may encounter narrations which befit the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Delacroix, 2014) definition on legends as “old well-known stories, often about brave people, adventures, or magical events”.

Upon the structural examination of urban legend works, the apparent conceptual parallelism which would initially bond both genres efface with remarkable ease. So considerable is the contrast that it may be asserted that these two literary typologies might hardly be more dissimilar. One of the most salient factors where urban legends and traditional legends diverge pertains the contextual framework of the narration both comprise.

Traditional legends have operated as recipients, where the epic adventures of superhumans who reputedly made an extraordinary



contribution to the civilisations where they are defended to occur have crystallised, aside the passing of the time, for the celebration of the deed in the descending generations as an immaterial token for their gratitude to the hero.

Although the transcendence of identity beyond the limited existence of the human might seem, up to a certain point, banal, it shall be reminded that honour has historically been an asset which had an equivalent worth to the life of the “honour’s owner” itself (Speier, 1935; Ward, 1983). Honour and family name have been used to evaluate the value of reputation from the according perspective (Phipps, 2017), as evidenced in the medieval duels where a scheduled lethal encounter was organised in an attempt to restore the respect and credit upon the occurrence of an offence pertaining the personal or family name.

Following a similar trend, traditional legends also exhibit a remarkable regularity as for the specificity of the physical settings, which respond to concrete and recognisable, either fantastic or tangible, locations. Thus, there is an inseparable connection between the story narrated and the geographical situation where it is asserted to occur. A world-wide known legend which illustrates the basic contextual cues of traditional legends would be found in the Emerald Island. Centuries ago, Saint Patrick is reported to have turned Ireland into a paradise upon the erase of every single trace of snakes, in the fifth century of the Current Era, with the assistance of his supernatural powers, transferred from the Catholic divinity to him for the quest.

The choice of this reptile, as the animal to extinguish in the island could not be merely arbitrary, when contemplated as a prominent symbol of the evil for Christianity since early evangelisation. The *Genesis book* in the Christian sacred scriptures, *The Bible* (Oxford Bible, 2009), presents the Snake as an incarnation of Satan, who persuades inferior Eve to manipulate Adam, the Christian God’s creation “to his image and seeming”, to disobey the divinity and condemn humankind to a life of suffering.

As Owen (2014) confirms, far from being a milestone by one of the most salient figures in Catholicism, the peculiar inexistence of the “slithering reptiles” in the “land of leprechauns and 4-leaf sham-rocks” is logically explained to respond to the inability of snakes to swim across the saline water bodies which surround the territory.

Despite the argumentation provided by science, which debunks the fantastic elements of this instance of traditional legend, Saint



Patrick's deed is still celebrated as the yearly event of the Eire Republic sixteen centuries later, which would hint at the deep enrooting of these accounts in the culture of the Western nations.

Diametrically opposed to the space-temporal precision which characterises traditional legends, their "urban" alternatives show a sense of universality that would permit a total customisation of the context of the inner frame of the urban legend to the circumstances of the potential target audience. Contextual adaptability permits the maximisation of its relevance and its phatic functionality, in virtue of an effective involvement of the narratee into the story and, subliminally, into the ideological precepts encoded in it. Hence, the specific chronological and geographical aspects which provide a solid framework for the events elaborated on in urban legends would not be, interestingly enough, attached to the plot itself, but to the addressee. It is precisely the narration receptor will subsequently assume an ambivalent role as narrator of a story, along with its values and precepts, which, as studied later on, is not acknowledged as a fiction by the participants in its transmission.

The chameleonic nature of these ever-individualising accounts, as oriented to the pertinence and viralisation of its message, along with the ideological loads embedded in its structure, may be observed in anthologies such as Ortí and Sampere's (2007). These folklorists estimate the collection of over 4000 urban legends versions, by means of systematic surveys in a great diversity of contexts, where the striking stories would have been retrieved from different age groups, academic backgrounds and areas within both public and private environments.

As a result of the research conducted, Ortí and Sampere (2007) succeeded to compile a vast body of urban legends with shared key narrative elements. The basics of these urban legends are observed to be complemented with non-nuclear hints for the customisation of the literary product to every audience's chronological, geographic, and cultural frameworks.

The closeness recreated by urban legends, with immersive purposes, would be another contrastive structural factor which accentuates the difference between urban legends and traditional legends. The immersive factor introduced by the former, which facilitates the active participation in the text as a prospective affected by the events narrated, is not present in the latter, where remoteness only permits the integration of both narrator and narratee as third-person witness,



impeding simultaneously the incursion of any participant inside the narrative frame of the epic legend.

Specifically, the complicity of the urban legend addressees would be intensively promoted by the completion of the narration, where the events reported exhibit an abrupt turn that breaches the receivers' expectations and takes narratees aback. In the surprising conclusion, a flat character with a remarkably vague description is exposed to a compromising situation which would be oriented at the caution of the audience on a potential danger to be suffered by them personally or their beloved. The non-specificity of narration ultimately aids the identification of the protagonist and focaliser within the narrative frame with either the narratee or acquaintances in their close socio-political environment.

To these regards, "La pandilla sangre" urban legend, collated by Spanish journalist and writer Camacho (2007: 10-19), could illustrate the implementation of alarming narrative elements for the empathising of the potential victim and narratee with the narrative patient. In particular, the "Bloody gang" urban legend elaborates on the initiation rite of the homonymous organised group. In its ritual, the candidate to enter such a small-sized, yet dangerous, syndicate must drive a car amidst darkness in a random road to lead other drivers to warn them on their oblivious lightless driving. The driver's uninterested caution would trigger the chase-up of the helpful, and subsequent assassination of the driver for the satisfaction of the ceremony.

The blurry delimitation between the verisimilar fiction and reality in urban legends becomes evident in "La pandilla sangre", where there is an interesting paradox between the sources which reveal the narrative nature of the account, such as fact check and verification portal Snopes (2010), and the confirmation by journalists, as López (2010), on the occurrence of similar initiation rites, inspired in the urban legend, as a result of its popularisation in the United States.

The operativity of such a mechanism to attract the attention and the interest of the narratee is further accomplished by means of the victimisation of a third person from the narrator friends, family or acquaintances near social environment, which enhances, by transference, trust on the story. Thus, complying with the logic of the Spanish idiom "*los amigos de mis amigos son mis amigos*" (i.e., my friends' friends are my friends too), the narrators' trust in their beloved acquaintance's existence is transferred into the narratee, upon their reliance on the narrator.



The combination of the plot apparent veracity, with the narratee's delegated trust and the cautionary ending, into the special cocktail urban legends integrate, compels the potential addressees to spread the plot. Thus, the first-term addressees' attempt to protect their beloved from becoming the victim of any potential damage from the ignorance of the account establishes in a sort of viral dynamic that maximises its expansion. The dissemination of the story implies the viralisation of the ideological concerns on the roles assumed by the prototypical characters, and the corresponding fatal consequences their performance causes, in a simulated, controlled, narrative framework where the ideals and values are inserted, as desired by the urban legend's creator in its design process.

To these regards, it is interesting to observe a frequent correspondence between the alterity system of values of supremachism, which conceptualises contrastively the figure of the male as a strong, determined and cold-minded authority to bring balance to the disruptions caused by unskilled, emotionally unstable and, at times, evil women who pose a risk to common safety and the integrity of the whole system in their trespassing incursions into the public sphere of society.

2

The urban legend as source for representational gender alterity and vehicle for the vectorisation of supremachism

When regarding the characteristics of these peculiar folk narrations, urban legends may well be deemed as the perfect viral vehicle for the spread of narrative-based indoctrination.

The aforementioned alterity, mirror-like, depiction of the vicious woman to displace and confine, as opposed to the virtuous and exemplary man who leads society with rigour, justice and diligence, initially theorised by De Beauvoir (2015), is discovered upon the exploration of metamessages. Metamessages integrate the set of power dynamics established through interaction, where seemingly naïve acts do carry, embedded, entailments which disrupt the desirable power balance between the two sex groups, upholding, thus, the male chauvinist system of values by means of urban legend narrations.



The considerable dimensions of the urban legend repertoires edited together in the aforementioned works would solely confirm the transversality of the patriarchal approach to society and its social actors in the Western world, as a rather holistic phenomenon.

Major urban legends repertoires by Spanish Ortí and Sampere (2017), Camacho (2005, 2007) and English Brown & Flynn (2003), and Brunvald's (1989, 1999) urban legends collections, could reveal a systematic tension generated by the destructive and chaotic woman, who must remain stays under the control and custody of her male figure of reference, either her husband or father, or her brother.

Indeed, the accounts collated by these first order authorities, as for the scritunisation of the urban legend and the phenomena which converge in such a peculiar literary genre at the crossroads of the fiction and reality, may permit to observe the viralisation of Western supremachist alterity, gender-based, stereotypical views. The pursued effects of the dramatized realities depicted would befit the compartmentalisation of society in the two spheres of society, namely public and private, and the sub-public spheres I established, namely professional life, politics and religion.

As prescribed by the governing principles of socio-political structuration in Western patriarchies, the male custody is rather a requirement for the maintenance of the frail equilibrium typically disrupted by the vicious and socially incompetent woman, which keeps the appropriate operativity of Western human communities.

Thus, a modern, nearly atemporal, replication of the Catholic Neoplatonist values may be contemplated to operate in the alluded works. Neoplatonism in urban legends specifically materialises in a spherified representation of society where the salience of the male in public areas is favoured for the satisfaction of their providential assignment by the Christian divinity. Simultaneously, the female is excluded from politics, religious and professional life for the fulfilment of family care in private environments, in an attempt to prevent the disastrous, yet unpredictable, consequences of women's effective leadership.

The recurrent dissatisfaction of both their providential assignation as family carers and householders in the private sphere of the house would trigger the first alarm of supremachism. Likewise, the simultaneous inability of the portrayed female to fulfil any role usurped from the male superior authorities in public spaces, which are not exempt from undesirable consequences for other members of the



community, would stand, by itself, as a justification for the confinement of the female to the prison-like home. The appropriateness of home as reclusion setting would be figuratively related to the local range of affectation of female vice and lack of diligence, which are ultimately diminished by the exercise of a consistent male custody.

Additionally, the exploration of the consequences of female characters' deeds in society, which must be necessarily mitigated, controlled and confined by the restoring presence of a male authority in the compliance of his assigned duty to protect the human group with the assistance of his physical and intellectual strength, is a leitmotif in the justification of the displacement of the supposed female trespassers.

Such undesirable effects, which typically derive from women's unrestrained range of action, is particularly interesting to observe in an abnormal situation, according to the patriarchal standards, where the decay of the male custody on the incompetent women to look after from a superior position is an omen of an upcoming female disaster. Hence, only urban legends which elaborate on the absence of a male authority, either in the perpetrator's family, such as a father, a husband, or an adult brother, or in public spaces, including police forces, will be eligible for exploration.

Such a pivotal absence of a man who has the faculty to restrict the conduct of the female figures would perform a two-fold contribution for the alterity definition of social actors. The alluded restriction would both define the latter as a source of destruction to contain physically and socio-politically, and the former as the antidote to restore the natural equilibrium, as conceived by the Christian God.

Interestingly, the convergence point in the urban legend comprises a stereotypical representation of female figures as undesired protagonist of disturbing stories, who are discovered to recurrently be the cause of the fatal ending. The female disaster is typically caused by the natural ignorance, incompetence or evilness they are conceived to hold according to the alterity-based depiction of the woman against the referential men in the system of values of supremachist establishments.



3

*The double disability of the old woman
in Camacho's urban legend repertoire*

In the event the supremachist approach to women as a naturally limited human is inserted in these cautionary tales which purport to account for real-life casualties, reluctance may be generated around the potentially devastating performance of the female. In the particular case of Santiago Camacho's (2007) "Secado Rápido", the concerns of supremachism on the naturally handicapped woman to confine combine with the existing prejudices on the reduced capabilities inherent to the elder age, in pursuit of the promotion of a stereotypical image of the woman.

Consequently, women are characterised as potentially dangerous socio-political agents who pose a threat to the integrity of other members of the community on the ground of their incompetence. Thus, the urban legend would summon the urgent need to confine the female individuals within the prison-like 4 walls of the house to prevent undesired collateral damages to unrelated individuals in the macropolitical stratum of the public sphere.

As opposed to young women, who may overall satisfy the demands on the male-led system by assuming a discreet position of secondary relevance with no influence on decision-making, old ladies are warned to be locked down within the house. Such a confinement is to be carried out, under no exception, under the diligent supervision and control of the corresponding male of reference, either the husband, an adult son or a close male relative.

The lack of a male custody is illustrated by the warning tale, where the absence of the grandmother's late husband causes the unrestrained performance of the "clumsy" old lady, to redound into the disgrace of innocents. Such an omen would specifically contextualise in the aftermath of a birthday party, where the lonely grandmother surprises her puppy when eating anxiously from the family feast leftovers. The side effects of a lack of a consistent male supervising figure leads to a fatal abrupt ending that triggers an alarm in the target audience's minds and initiates the process of prophylactic viralisation of the narrative construct.

In the urban legend, an interesting phenomenon which directly pertains the representation of the woman is recreated. Women



are, according to the supremacist views, inevitably unsatisfactory. Whenever the old female sticks to the expectations of the system, she would confirm her dependence, emotionality and need of supervision. However, if the old lady decides to assume a proactive position and takes on her own initiatives, the disaster is served. The double dissatisfaction of the female performance in patriarchies was a phenomenon reflected on Ardener (1975), who denominated it as “double bind”.

In fact, Camacho’s (2005) “Secado Rápido” would be a clear illustration of those denigratory accounts where the gender conceits of the male supremacist system of values on the female are transfigured into a deeply ignorant woman. The lack of competence and exacerbated emotionalism of the protagonist pose a threat to the different members of the community, even when prophylactically confined at the private sphere of the house.

Interestingly, the alterity description of the secondary male and female characters in the narration becomes evident from the introduction, where the third-person narrator compares the appreciation of the protagonist grandmother for the sentimental partners of her son and daughter, with a clear lean on her son-in-law.

Su hija mayor se había casado
con un muchacho encantador
—a pesar de esa coleta que se
empeñaba en llevar —

[...]

Tampoco faltó su hijo, que,
tan payaso como siempre,
le había puesto un gorro de
cucurucho, mientras la
estirada de su mujer lo miraba
con evidente desaprobación.

Her oldest daughter had married
a charming lad — in spite of that
ponytail he was set on wearing —

[...]

Her son did not miss the party.
As silly as usual, he had placed
a cone-shaped hat, as his snooty
wife stared at him with obvious
disapproval.

Camacho (2005: 49)

The incompetence the female protagonist is already attributed by the mere sake of being born as a woman is not the only representational conceit on the female. The urban legend is also observed



to summon ageism, a form of discrimination which builds on the disabilities which are naturally acquired by humans in their “second childhood”, when they senility imposes dependence on functional adults and requires care provision similar to those received by children in their early lives.

Such a peculiar combination of the female and the elder, which would create a doubly disabled stereotypical character, materialises in a tender old grandmother. As an essential trait of the elder female, she is presented to become socially dysfunctional after the decay of her late husband custody, which is suggested to bring desolation and confusion to the dependent lady once the person who directed her ways for years disappeared.

La abuelita no cabía en sí de gozo.
Desde la muerte de su marido, este
era el primer cumpleaños que
disfrutaba de verdad.

The granny was as happy as a dog
with two tails. Since her husband
passed away, this was the first
birthday she enjoyed for real.

Camacho (2005: 49)

As reflected on in the story plot of the urban legend, the custody of the woman, which is prescriptively legated in a sort of relay dynamic by the father of the family when the young woman marries her groom, and, thereon, to the oldest son in case of widowhood, is wrongly left unassumed by the descendants of the grandmother and her deceased life companion.

También estaban allí sus dos hijos
casados con sus respectivas
parejas.

Her two sons had attended
the event too, along with their
respective couples.

Camacho (2005: 49)

Indeed, in compliance with the patriarchal expectations on the female custody, deeply enrooted into her views on how society should prescriptively be structured, the tender grandmother laments, with the abnegation that every decent lady “should” exhibit, the depart of her sons and the upcoming loneliness, which she secretly laments to have become a familiar sensation’.



Fue un día especial y, a pesar de
que cuando se marcharon sus
visitas sintió de nuevo el familiar
peso de la soledad, no pudo
menos que sonreír con satisfacción.

It was a special day, and
the granny could nothing
but to smile, out of
satisfaction, even if she
felt the familiar burden
of loneliness when her
visitors left.

Camacho (2005: 49)

The economic dependence of the elder woman is an assumed reality which would stem from the traditional lockdown of the female in the private sphere of the house for the performance of family care and husband assistance duties. The grandmother's deprivation from the full-right participation in the public sub-sphere of professional life is clearly stated as a limitation in the old woman's possibilities, upon the death of her late husband.

Such a restriction would not only befit costs of the appliances, which may not be elevated in the case of the microwave gifted. Indeed, it would also respond to initiative voided by the channelisation of her will into the figure of her husband, entitled by the male supremacist establishment to make unconsented decisions on behalf of the whole family unit.

Sus hijos se habían acordado de ella
y le habían llevado una tarta y un
regalo: un moderno horno microondas
de última generación. Fue un obsequio
que le hizo especial ilusión, ya que el
microondas era un adelanto que
siempre
había querido tener pero que, a pesar
de
no ser demasiado caro, nunca se había
decidido a comprar.

Her sons bore the special date
in mind and decided to bring a
cake and a present: a top-notch
modern microwave oven.
The gift got her thrilled, as she
always wanted to have one of
those appliances, which she
kept hesitating to buy, even
if it was not prohibitive.

Camacho (2005: 49)



The emotional instability of the old lady, which is one of the prototypical traits women are depicted to inherently be defined by, as a justification for women's inability to rule human communities with the required cold-minded approach, is evidenced by the quick succession of emotions she is described to feel throughout the short story.

In few lines, the grandmother moves from the euphoria about the possibility to enjoy her birthday for the first time since the death of her husband, to the thrill about her new microwave and the way it may revolutionise her performance at the kitchen. Subsequently, sadness appears when the family departs, unease emerges when the grandmother discovers there are pieces of cake all over the kitchen, and anger takes over the grandmother when she catches her little dog red-handed (rather "red-pawed").

In addition to the lack of competence to keep her emotions under control, the elder female in the urban legend does exhibit another recurrently feature women would systematically be attributed in these narrative formats. A remarkably deep ignorance serves as a source of destruction and poses a severe risk to the integrity of the living creatures that coexist with her in the private sphere. In the particular case of "Secado Rápido", the scene where the puppy dirties when feeding off the leftovers of the feast would anticipate the chaos to follow.

No es que a la abuelita le importara
que el caniche comiera tarta [...] pero,
al haber tomado él mismo la iniciativa,
había diseminado el pastel por toda la mesa y, peor aún, se
había puesto perdido de merengue y mermelada de hocico a rabo.

Not that the granny did mind about her poodle having eaten cake [...], but the dog's initiative had spread the cake all over the table and, what is worse, it got dirty, through and through, with meringue and jam.

Camacho (2005: 50)

The disaster caused by the unsupervised puppy in the kitchen moves the grandmother to feel compelled to make a decision, which serves as trigger for the miseries to subsequently occur.



El travieso Pierre se había ganado
una buena reprimenda y, sobre todo,
una de las cosas que más odiaba de
su perruna vida, un baño.

Mischievous Pierre deserved
a scolding and, essentially,
one of the things it hated most
in its dog life, a bath.

Camacho (2005: 50)

As it becomes evident with the progression of the urban legend narration, the honest intentions of the old lady do not match her incompetence to implement them with the appropriate tools and safety conditions. The use of the kitchen sink as chosen place for the bath and a profusely foamy shampoo especially formulated for children's hygiene places the grandmother's lack of diligence under the spotlight.

La abuelita llenó de champú para
niños el fregadero con agua tibia
a la que añadió un chorro de
champú para niños que produjo
de inmediato una abundante espuma.

The granny filled the sink
with mild water, where
she poured children's
shampoo, producing an
abundant foam short after.

Camacho (2005: 50)

The effects of the grandmother's actions in her poodle's wellbeing, who is asserted to "whine non-stop" while it tried to leave the kitchen sink, are discovered not to be associated to the casualty occurred after the birthday party. The soaked body of the little pet suggest the negligent character of the old woman, which is described to exhibit "far more bones than flesh" (Camacho, 2005: 50). The affectation of the helpless dog by the old woman's insufficient care would not be delimited to the mere physical look of the skinny dog. In fact, the psyche of the dog is also claimed to be undermined by the treatment received from its elder owner.



Como si el animal fuera
consciente de la humillación
de mostrar sus magras
desnudeces, en aquellas
ocasiones siempre mostraba
en la mirada una expresión
triste y resignada [...].

As if the creature was aware
of how humiliating the
exhibition of its lean nude body
was, it always showed a sad and
resigned expression in its eyes
in such a situation [...].

Camacho (2005: 50)

At this point, the ignorance that characterises the elder woman in the urban legend, which predisposes narratees to realise, in the progression of the scene, the potential disaster female leadership could bring to the community in the event of the decay of the patriarchy. In particular, the elder woman's intellectual inferiority leads her to find an alternative solution to dry her puppy. Inspired by the pseudo advice of a friend of her, the grandmother opts to dry her dog in her new microwave, in an attempt to minimise the risk of having her pet to catch a cold.

Acaso no lo utilizaba su amiga
Aurelia
para secarse las medias, pues
igualmente
serviría para su caniche, y así se
evitaría
el riesgo de que el perro cogiese uno
de
sus frecuentes resfriados.

Didn't her friend Aurelia use it
to dry her socks? Then it should
work with her poodle, and she
would, thus, prevent her dog from
catching one of its usual colds.

Camacho (2005: 51)

Interestingly, the dog is attributed a common sense which overpasses its old owner's. Thus, a sort of ranking is established, where the logical husband, previously in charge of the female custody, is followed by the intuitive pet who can foresee the catastrophic results of the grandmother's experiments. The absolutely uninformed woman, who exhibits a reckless behaviour with potential harmful side effects for the helpless, would occupy the last step in the hierarchy.



La abuelita pensaba que no había peligro [...] El que no parecía ni mucho menos tan confiado con los resultados del experimento era el caniche [...]. Pierre no podía quitarse de encima el equivalente perruno de un mal presentimiento.

The granny reckoned there was no harm in it [...] Who was suspicious of the result of the experiment was the poodle [...]. Pierre couldn't get rid of the canine equivalent to a bad omen.

Camacho (2005: 51)

Remarkably, the ignorance exhibited by the grandmother, far from being humble, attributes the formerly tender character a nuance of arrogance. Such an aspect, which is clearly associated with pride, one of the catholic deadly sins, is observed in the old woman's inclination to self-praise her own idea, who believes to be clever than her own sons and even considers applying her new invention to assist her in her house chore duties, such as clothes dry-up.

La abuelita estaba entusiasmada con las posibilidades de su nuevo juguete. Seguro que a ninguno de sus hijos se le había ocurrido que los estrenaría de aquella manera. Incluso comenzaba a plantearse utilizarlo como secadora para toda su ropa delicada.

The granny was excited with the possibilities offered by her new toy. She was sure her sons would not imagine she would give such a first use to her microwave. She even reckoned using it to use it as tumble machine for her most delicate clothes.

Camacho (2005: 51)

The arrogance of the grandmother soon fades away when she realises the experiment does not proceed as she imagined. The monumental failure of the cocky grandmother's plans is emphasised in the urban legend that relates, with a crude description, the agony and death of the little dog, as caused by the oblivious grandmother.



Los ojos de Pierre se abrieron
desmesuradamente y en la
garganta del animal germinó
un sonido espantoso y agudo
mientras hacía denodados
esfuerzos por abrirse paso
a través de la puerta de cristal
arañando con sus patas delanteras.

Pierre's eyes opened wide
and its throat groaned a
hideous piercing sound,
while it made desperate
efforts to break through
the door glass, scratching
it with its front paws.

Camacho (2005: 51)

The fatal ending, which extinguishes the suspense recreated by the scene in the narratee, would be aimed at the fostering the sense of tragedy which derives from the grandmother's reckless behaviour. The abrupt conclusion interestingly fosters the dramatism of the calculated ideological depiction of the female and maximise the emotional involvement of the narratee in the story and the values it intends to impose, by means of persuasion and caution, into the desired target audience.

[...] un tremendo estampido
levantó el electrodoméstico varios
centímetros en el aire, desencajando
la puerta, que quedó súbitamente
tapizada de un rojo intenso.
Despachurrado contra el cristal, los
restos de un único ojo parecían
mirar acusadoramente a la abuelita.

[...] an enormous blow
lifted the appliance some
centimetres over the furniture,
dismounting the door, now
covered in dark red. Squished
on the glass, the remains of a
single eye showed an accusing
look at the granny.

Camacho (2005: 51)

The accusative eye of the remains of the little dog, which lays on the broken door of the grandmother's present, would ultimately serve as a narrative element to guide the narratee's criticism onto the involuntary perpetrator of the animal's torture.

In a sort of blunt closing, covert teaching embedded, the concerns of the male supremacist establishment on the systemic deleterious effects of female leadership from public spaces would have on the



community, provided the local destruction caused, even when confined in the private sphere of the house, when women are not subject to the diligent control of a male figure of reference.

Thus, the peril of the grandmother, deriving from her gender inferiority and the diminishment associated to her age, would menace the mental and physical integrity of the members of the community, even when relegated to the private sphere of the house. These female-caused disasters would intensify by means of the existential absence of the referential male custody, caused by the death of the husband, which redounds into the vital misery of the elder female and render the control and supervision of the woman, with prophylactic purposes, dangerously inexistent, as illustrated in the cruel death of the defenceless puppy in the microwave.

Thus, “Secado Rápido” would reveal as one of the prototypical examples where urban legends are deployed by the patriarchal apparatus to viralise its male supremacist precepts by means of the presentation of verisimilar daily-life events of stereotypical characters. In the astounding ending of the account, the symbolic load attached to these flat characters is deployed to misportray the immediate socio-political environment of the collective to denigrate, which in the case of male chauvinism befits the female sex group.

The free-range woman and the twilight of the civilised landscape

1

Gender breach relies on bipolarity, and so does feminism

Hitherto, narrations designed with essential ideological content may have evidenced to be an instrument of social and political control of paramount importance to keep the gender-based reputation of individuals in supremachist establishments. The differential consideration of both genders carries embedded an unbalance of perks which stems from the consideration social actors are provided by definition. The uniformity of gender representation would ultimately prevent any potential attempt by women to surpass the limitations devised by the system specially for them, as the first steps of a conquest for the absolute subversion of the patriarchal status quo in favour of a sincerely democratising gender equality.

There is an overall tendency to perceive the gender breach in supremachism as a unilateral mechanism which would rely, nearly entirely, on the submission of the female to the rules of the system that preview the displacement of women from the power cores. The relegation of women from the public sphere entails a veto from the public sphere of professional life, politics and, less prominently along the sophistication of human thinking, religion.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned focus on the female control for the prevalence of such an unequal socio-political structuration, it shall be borne in mind that no unbalance may exist by itself. Instead, it is necessary to rely on another term at the other end of the equation which actively works to exercise a strong coercion that effectively responds to the principles of the governing hierarchisation.



To clear it up, the appropriate operativity of patriarchies necessarily requires the male assumption of the role of prominent leaders to govern society in the three realms of the public sphere, namely professional occupations, institutional and economical power, and faith management at mass scale.

Thus, a bipolar narration-based ideologisation would be necessary to discourage the possibilities of the female individuals, who may aspire to improve their living conditions and equate their perks to their counterparts are provided by default on the ground of a differential chromosomic configuration.

Simultaneously, the urban narration would persuade men to assume the collateral responsibility of performing an effective custody of the female in the private sphere to compensate the females' supposed natural incompetence and save themselves and society from the potentially disastrous effects of their lack of diligence.

Hence, narratives are observed to allude to the common wellbeing as an excuse to ideologically justify the relegation of women to private spheres scenarios. As a result of this process, men are actively involved by the system in the male chauvinist contemporary social structuration to faithfully incite men's compromise in the duty. The alluded male commitment to their role would occur, either by performing a continual renovation in their role, in the case of adult men who are already engaged in the tasks assigned by the establishment, or by inheriting their new attributions from their ascendants in the transition of male teenagers to their adult, public-oriented, lives.

The complicity of men in the reinforcement of the artificial barriers, in a sort of glass ceiling which contributes to the rigidity of social strata in patriarchies, is not only fundamental for the effective exercise of control on the relegated. Indeed, it imposes a passive limitation that impedes the dismantling of the system from inside. In other words, gender equality does not only entail the sacrifice of the female to achieve even recognition by means of the subversive feminist cause, but also calls for the participation of convinced men to strive for actual democracy. Unless the collective who has historically held the entitlement to administrate power and recognition concedes, no real change is to occur.

To these regards, word-by-mouth narrations may be discovered to be central in the portrayal of the female as inherently vicious individuals, in pursuit of the ideological legitimisation of their prophylactic confinement inside the house. The major ideological legitimisation of



the female lockdown would befit the minimization of the destructive effects which would derive from women's inabilities.

2

The Genesis *original sin and the disaster to narrate forever: the humankind's female burden*

As discussed in chapter five, the extensive review of major anthologies of urban legends, edited by English folklorist Brunvald (1989, 1999) and Brown & Flynn (2003), and Spanish journalists Camacho (2005, 2007) and Ortí and Sampere (2007), leads to the detection of highly stereotypical conceptualisations of the male and the female, which insistently repeat throughout the urban stories.

Such prefabricated archetypes of neoplatonic inspiration would constitute consistent identities attached to male characters, depicted as virtuous individuals made to the Christian God's image and likeness, for the assumption of their providential government duties, with justice, logic, and cold mind as capital features.

By contrast, female characters are observed to be subject to a certainly biased portrayal, on clear gender grounds, which would characterise them as vicious, reckless, and arrogant individuals who can endanger, either intentionally or incompetently, the welfare of the community and its members. The case of the ignorant and arrogant grandmother in "Secado Rápido" urban legend would incarnate this prototypical view of the woman, as approached from the supremacist ideological conceptions.

As a result of the overall study of the aforementioned collection of atemporal pseudo-mythic accounts, a remarkable contrast of the treatment provided to the male and female characters may be observed.

Such a dynamic would exhibit an undeniable lean on the promotion of the former, which would come out, both indirectly by comparison and directly through denigration, in detriment of the female actors presented in the simulated, highly controlled, dramatisation.

The configuration of the male characters as respondent to the duties previewed by the Christian God in its genesis magna opera has historically operated as a foundational principle for the civilisations who dwelled the Western world, from the fate-oriented Greek and Roman classicism to the contemporary Europe and United States.



The male order restorers are compelled to perform, by the patriarchal providence, wherever the sinful female subversion violates the established order and disrupts the perfectly cyclic system *Ex Deus* maintained, by appointing, by its manly descendance.

The same principles applied by the legal system which regulates social interaction for peacekeeping since the dawn of human communities, whose main operativity was to physically set aside and socially ostracise those individuals or collectives attempting against the established order, would be applied to the reputedly socially non-adapted women.

As evaluated from the rather prescriptive expectations of the governing Western patriarchies, the rebellious female would be subject to a physical imprisonment in the private sphere of the house, along with a pseudo-ethical constraint of their expressive and activity possibilities, in a dynamic which may well be denominated under the label of “female caging”.

3

The constant replication of the original sin in casual female actions

3.1 ANY WOMAN, ANYWHERE: THE FEMALE VICE ROUNDING ANY CORNER By way of example, “Chain Reaction” urban legend, collated by popular culture researchers Brown & Flynn (2003) in their urban legend anthology, may be a unique representative of those urban legend accounts which denigrate female behaviour in public. Specifically, its plot depicts, simultaneously, women’s unrestrained range of action in community spaces, even if occasional, as a threat to the integrity of the species’ works and attainments.

In such an account, the male chauvinist establishment may be contemplated to serve the purpose of legitimising the social, interactive and behavioural restrictions on women’s range of action, both within and outside the private sphere.

As opposed to the woman protagonist of the urban legend, the leading male character would erect as a neutralising force which would resort to the diligence, intelligence and cold-mind men would have been naturally designed to hold to control the situation. Thus, the male authority would counteract the destructive effects of the subversive woman, who acts freely under no effective male custody.



The gender equal treatment which would lay as a key pillar in democracies should, under this approach to a gender-based socio-political structuration, necessarily be nullified for the guaranteeing of a common wellbeing disrupted by the vicious members of the female collective.

When applied to the narrative framework of “Chain reaction” (Brown & Flynn, 2003) urban legend, the need to displace and retain women in the private sphere of the house for the enhancement of male leadership is discovered in the course of a public bus trip. During its course, a self-centred flat female character, who is only identified as an Italian woman, to aid narratees’ identification with female figures in their respective real-life environments, decides to break the etiquette of conventional behaviour in public spaces, which befit the set of non-official rules to observe for a successful interpersonal coexistence in communal contexts, as in the case of shared vehicles.

Remarkably, the only possible outcome of the female transgression of the supremacist expectations is, as readers may foresee, a wave of destruction with unpredictable consequences. Such a fatal casualty resonates with the micro-sociopolitical repercussions of the old grandmother’s lack of male supervision in “Secado Rápido” urban legend (chapter 5), where a defenceless puppy was bound to pay, with its precious life, the double disability of its owner, where elder age and femininity combined into a non-defusable time bomb.

From the very beginning of the story, the urban legend reveals as a cautionary account which prescribes the narratee not follow the non-exemplary conduct of the Italian woman, in order to avoid becoming what is pejoratively referred as a “scum”. The initial warning is explicitly expressed in the early onset of the urban legend, where the narrator expresses “This story might serve as a warning to all litter bugs out there” (Brown & Flynn, 2003).

Immediately after such a warning, narratees’ attention is drawn to the non-conforming Italian woman, whose microviolation of the prescription to respect the rest of the passengers during the bus trip materialises in the scoffing and munching of hazelnuts while sharing the public space of reduced dimensions the vehicle is.

Her evident lack of manners, which hints at her inadequate politeness and subtly serves the first argument on the need to lock down the vaguely identified woman, makes the Italian woman to automatically dissatisfy the prototypical lady expectations imposed by



the patriarchal status quo. The weight of the patriarchal expectations on gender conceptualisation includes both women as the object to observe, and the urban legend narratees, as members of the community to interact within provided mental schemes.

At this point, readers may be familiar with the disgusting sensation of encountering a person who eats anxiously, makes noises and accidentally casts food pieces while munching. This sensation may be especially prominent when such a behaviour occurs in reduced, closed spaces, which would come to stress the Italian uncivil woman's lack of respect to the system of laws which regulates public life in the civilized Western world.

3.2 THE INNOCUOUS AT THE PERVERTED WOMAN'S HANDS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MALE-CREATED LANDSCAPE the Italian woman's lack of commitment to the rules of behaviour in society intensifies when the protagonist accidentally eats a rotten hazelnut. Subsequently, the uncivil woman is tempted to throw the leftover of the munched nut through the window of the public transport vehicle, an infraction to the legal code of multiple Western countries due to the potential consequences it may have in the rest of the users of the vial ways.

Thus, the tragedy is served by the uncivil woman, causing mass-scale destruction in the civilised landscape which symbolises the fruits of the gathering of the human community around patriarchal systems of socio-political organisation.

A hyperbolic narration would relate the consequences of framing the female's reckless behaviour in public locations. The impact of a supposedly naïve female behaviour in the public space where the urban account occurs quickly expands from the Italian citizen's micro and meso-socio-political areas of the public sphere.

Such a butterfly effect, which is clearly attributed to the uncivil woman, would be observed in the swerve of the car which drives behind the bus, in the same lane, which causes, as a domino effect, the hard turn of another car and a truck, in an attempt to avoid an inevitable accident which ends end up in the crashing of the truck into a nearby gas station.

The overall balance of the woman's inappropriate behaviour in the public sphere involves the injury of over a hundred people and the devastation of dozens of cars, nearby malls, and the petrol station, setting the skyline of the manly creation in flames.



Thus, even a seemingly innocent and irrelevant short-term stay outside the physical limits of the female protagonist's house is presented as a source of destruction. Therefore, according to supremacist standards, the female incursion in the public sphere must be impeded by means of a diligent male custody and, ultimately, by means of the implementation of a prophylactic confinement of the naturally incompetent and insufficiently polite woman.

In the comparison of the uncivil female with the set of flat male characters in the urban legend, gender would reveal as a substantial element to the nature of the contribution of the different socio-political actors to the human group.

Unlike the inconsiderate female woman, the male bus driver would lead the population through the performance of his providential professional duties at the public sphere of the house. However, the beneficial effects of the manly contribution to society are highlighted to be potentially deviated by the trespassing woman, with the assistance of the hazelnut that she uses to negligently cause devastation, a clear morphological symbol of the women's genitalia, which would hint at the ability of the vicious woman to sexually manipulate men, as the holder of power and authority.

First of all, the comparison of the hazelnut with women's vulva may seem farfetched. However, the loss of the virtuosity and purity of the man, as result of the female manipulation of the male by means of seduction and sex turns, and the deleterious consequences of the corruption of the leading male, turn explicit upon the appearance of a policeman at the "crime scene".

When the police officer, who observes and reports on the accident, shows up, the socially recognised male authority provides a sort of moral-like closing reflection, where the agent highlights the liability of the female actor in the high-outreach desolation. From its superior positioning the male leader theorises, as a shared thought, the exponential damage the Italian woman would have caused if she was manipulating a phallic-shaped Brazil nut instead. Relief is, interestingly, the predominant feeling exhibited by the police officer upon his expression "Thank God it wasn't Brazil nut or the whole city might have gone up in flames".

Consequently, the female utilisation of the phallic symbol is equated to the total annihilation of the city, the symbol, by excellence, of human civilisation as a project achieved by the male assumption of leadership during the process of verticalisation of the ancient human proto-communities.



In this representational dynamic, a gradient of severity is established to classify the repercussions of conducts of the female on the other members of common use spaces and the urban landscape they comprise.

At one end, women would naturally integrate a source of disturbances to the rest of the social agents, which might derive from their refusal to conform to the rules. The revelation of the female as a destructive force materialises, in the story, into an attack to the male-led community and the components who do comply with the regulations established by the patriarchal establishment.

At the other end, the sexual corruption of the leading male, in hands of the subversive women, who would subdue the will of the providential ruler and manipulate it to the females' vicious convenience, would catalyse the dismantling of the patriarchal status quo, dramatised as the physical down-burning of the contemporary city.

Hence, the relegation of women, as social actors, to the private sphere of the house, would be presented as a prophylactic measure to protect the male creation of the Western world from the corruption of the inherently vicious, irreverent, female.

The sacred territory is no woman's land: the urban legend of Popess Joan as female-oriented warning tale

1

The female and the catholic church: a systematic incompatibility

The presence of the woman in the public sphere is portrayed as a potential danger to both the stability of the system- and the physical-ethical integrity of the individuals who fulfil their duties according to the assigned roles- by a great multiplicity of narrative formats with the multiple dissuasive purposes. On the one hand, these narrative artifices would pursue to warn women not to leave their unprivileged private positioning. On the other hand, such fictions would be oriented at the instruction of men to exercise control and custody on the relegated.

Thus, the homogeneity in the male hierarchy is maintained, in pursuit of the preservation of the virtue of the community, as gifted by the providential men leaders, who have historically been defended to be equipped both mentally and physically, by the Christian divinity, to assume leadership.

After all, the ideological tolerance to the ethics of the presence of the formerly displaced woman is only the first step to the aspiration to the effective incorporation of the female in current democracies, which will not be deemed to be fully successful until the long-discussed current debates on gender inequality are resolved.

Such pending debates would include, to everyone's knowing, the glass ceilings female still encounter in family conciliation, when they attempt to leave their houses to contribute to the community



progression. The cruel dichotomy to choose between starting a professional career or fulfilling their desires to become a mother is not to be dismissed as an unimportant issue either. The same consideration applies when women intend to thrive within their professional rankings or in the recognition of the entitlement to receive equal salary disregarding the prejudices associated to their biological sex.

Patriarchies would have historically designed a series of excluding resources to keep the three areas of the public sphere, namely religious, professional and political government, free from the influence of the female with a two-fold intention. On the one hand, supremachism would anticipate the female desire for an improvement of their disadvantaged living circumstances to the male standards and socio-political recognition. On the other hand, the patriarchal ideological apparatus would counteract the prospectively growing tolerance to the conceptual deconfinement of the female from their comfortably looking captivity,

2

The hermetic Catholic structures to female sensitivities in a creed in decay

Historically, one of the major mechanisms deployed for the prevention of the permeabilisation of the patriarchal institutions to the adhesion of women into their structures would be found in the Catholic church. In the organic structure of the creed, members are ranked by means of the assumption of a series of compromises with the creed under the sacrament of Holy Ordering, which etymologically implies the “ordering” of the candidates to enter the hierarchy into different strata.

Personal religious beliefs aside, the integration of a given individual in the colloquially called “God’s Army” is not a mere spiritual goal. The belonging to the Catholic consecrated has historically been associated to social positioning and recognition, which would stem from the institutional support of the Catholic Church to the political power from the Middle Ages to the decay of absolutism. In certain geographical areas of Europe, such as Spain, the influence of Catholicism in political matters would extend until the disappearing of dictator Francisco Franco and his model of tyranny based on National Catholicism.



Worldwide, the influence of Catholicism is only a fraction of its former outreach, albeit it concentrates a major follow-up in European countries such as Andorra (PEW Research Center, 2011), Croatia (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2012), Poland (Statistics Poland, 2016) and Portugal (Berkshire Hathaway, 2020). In the last of the three countries listed, at least, 85% of population are explored to be adhered to Catholicism. Other countries with high affluence of Catholics would be the African country Equatorial Guinea, with 80.7% of Catholic population (PEW Research Center, 2011), Asian Philippines, with 81.4% (PEW Research Center, 2011). American Honduras (Latinobarómetro, 2014: 16), and Oceania's Kiribati, with 63.11% of Catholic citizens (Kiribati Statistics Office, 2015: 56), also exhibit deep Catholic enrootings.

The modernisation of the Western contemporary world has inspired the adoption of new, alternative philosophic and spiritual tendencies in the overall population, including the evolutionary atheism. This trend is related to a phenomenon attributed by Barber (2012) to the consolidation of the "existential security hypothesis", which may correlate the satisfaction of basic necessities and living conditions as a source of certainty. Such stability might replace the former need to recur to the salvific faculties of the unknown; creeds can hardly be detached from the history -and prehistory- of the species.

According to research on the matter, the dawn of the human species is characterised by the appearance of a religious sentiment. Religiosity allowed proto-humans to transcend the existence of the tangible and instinctively conceive the existence of supernatural entities. These divinities would regulate, from a superior positioning, the fate of individuals and the rituals to promote fertility, protection, the healing of wounds and the transit of the deceased into the far beyond.

As theorised by Dupré (1975: 302), early human homo sapiens might have achieved a "development of culture as a meta-physical or meta-biological "trait" of the species man", which hints at a correlation between humanity and a natural inclination to subdue to omniscient unperceivable entities. A simple observation of such a hypothesis leads to conclude about the centrality of religion to human communities, provided its foundational character, as the religious believes governing wandering human groups preceded structured societies themselves.

As previously discussed, the intimate bond between religion and the secular political power in human societies would become espe-



cially prominent towards the beginning of the Common Era, when the Roman Empire that could well be deemed as the “founding father” of the Western world stopped prosecuting Catholicism. Thus, the former threat to the Latin polytheism, to torture and eradicate, replaced the previous phobia for Jesus Christ’s philosophic legacy into the religion of the ubiquitous Roman Empire, under the rule of Emperor Constantin the Great towards mid-fourth century.

Such would be the success of the enrooting of Catholicism in the structures of power of the Empire that the intromission of the aforementioned religious movement would endure the decay of the imperial organic institution, which may be discussed to foster the greatest expansion of the creed in its twenty-one-century existence, far into the Middle Age Europe.

In the centuries that followed, the fall of the Latin civilisation and its compartmentalisation into modest isolated monarchies would have gifted Catholicism with a vast influence in the absolutist establishments. In the feudal system, the Catholic Church was recognised as a privileged group within the upper society stratum, as the Church served the illiterate populace a legitimisation to justify that the feudal tyranny of the unquestionable absolute King stemmed from the will of the Christian God.

Hence, serving the Pope would have traditionally operated in the Western world as a transitional gate for men to transcend their former lives in the private sphere of the house, under the custody of their fathers, to become active contributors to the community, as a whole. The catholic movement also previewed the abnegated service of the female to the Church’s cause but, unlike the perk-related position the institution devised for men, the female intersection with Catholicism cannot be defined as a spiritual quest characterised by acknowledgement and a corresponding compensation for the services offered.

The feminist conquests have remarkably made an invaluable contribution to the attainment of women’s effective equality, both in socio-political consideration and legal entitlements. Since the second half of nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth and twenty-first-century world, feminism has fought for actual democracy. However, it is interesting to approach the Catholic church structure as one of the very few ideological strongholds which would exhibit, hitherto, an immutable determination to remain impermeable to the adhesion of the female to its hierarchy assuming a role of social and political salience.



The reluctance of the religious institution to open its idiosyncrasy to the female ordination may partially be explained by the origin of the creed. As Frattini (2010:8) details, Catholicism is an excision of Judaism, a religious movement whose conception of women would essentially be integrated by prejudices on the females' vicious and derivative nature with the demonic mission to corrupt the man, the proud creation of the Christian God "in his image and likeness".

3

Moral control and legitimisation of the patriarchy: the legacy of Catholicism in the Western world

The sense of belonging to a greater unit did not exclusively play a role in the conversion of nomad proto-human groups into stable, sedentary communities, which is the starting point of the historical organisation of societies. In fact, belonging and interaction are both basic factors intrinsic to human beings' social natural, which derives into the occurrence of serious detrimental effects to the humans' psyche when suppressed, as studied by Yagüe-Pasamón (2020) in the context of COVID-19 health crisis.

The inner stratification of human societies, which has reiteratively evidenced to be vital for the endurance in the failure of utopic anarchic projects such as 1983 "Paris' Commune", may well be considered necessary for the coordinated operativity of society in virtue of welfare. Although hierarchisation may be discussed as a functional model of populations' organisation, it shall not be ignored the unequal component inherent to vertical structures, which severely hinders the attainment of a full-right democracy. Hence, a correlation may be established between the positioning provided by the system to specific individuals and the life conditions they are subject to, being theorised as privileged in the case of men within the framework of Western contemporary patriarchies.

According to the Catholic creed, supremachism would not be an arbitrary or manipulative criterion for social organisation. Indeed, the leadership of men would allegedly befit the incarnation of the godly providence for humankind as expressed in the dogmatic precepts of the Sacred Scriptures. In *The Genesis* book, the supreme entity is defended to create men in his own image with the purpose of canalising the Christian God's grace and continue his opus. Following the



dogma, women, who are a derivational creature from men's ribs, would embody the evil and corrupt men to disobey the Christian God, as seen in humankind fall of disgrace from the Paradise.

The Christian God's choice of men to perform his plan would be reassured, as stated in the Bible literature, by the Apostolic Succession, where the Christian God's son Jesus Christ would select twelve male disciples as relay in his salvific quest and legitimate infusers of the Christian God's grace into other men through ordination sacrament, which allow them to execute godly will.

Just like in the expression of the Christian God's predilection for the male in *The Bible genesis* narration, Jesus Christ would have opted for the purity and virtue deposited by the Christian God in the man to continue his evangelising mission. the Christian God's legacy would be subsequently delegated into Bishops, the direct successor of Apostle and first Bishop of Rome, Saint Peter, and thereon to the priests, in a sort of pyramidal organisation for the massive spread of the "word of God".

The male supremacist ideology consubstantial to the apostolic succession dogma would be safeguarded by specific canonical regulation, which modulate the operativity of the hierarchy.

Canon legislation on the reinforcement of the apostolic succession would include 1975 *Declaration on the question of the admission of women to the ministerial Priesthood*, by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (1975). The aforementioned regulation defines the sacramental nature of male priesthood as a manifestation of the Christian God's plans. Likewise, in *Ordenatio Sacerdotalis*, on priest ordination, Pope John Paul II (1994) described male ordination as an inalterable requirement of the Christian God turned into a policy.

At this point, readers may note that the controverted discussion on the faculty of the Church to ordinate women may have been denounced to be a superficial debate but suggests ordination as a cornerstone in the DNA of the Vatican states system. In denotative terms, the process of ordination within the Catholic Church entails the insertion of an initiated into the "order" or groups of priests, bishops, or cardinals. However, when analysing the etymology of the term, the repercussions of ecclesiastic ordination may be understood to transcend the frontiers of religious life.

The concept "ordination", from Latin "*orden, ordinis*", would refer to the process of stratifying the establishment by assigning socio-political attribution to its members.



Since the era of feudal absolutism, the incorporation of male individuals to the Church has integrated one of the three gateways for the renovation of supremachism through the transition of new generations of men from the private sphere of the house. Thus, young men transcended their former discreet role as teenagers under the care of their corresponding mothers, to reach the public sphere of religious leadership, political activity or professional life, where they will play an active role in the shaping of the community fate.

Apostolic succession and male exclusive ordination would operate as shields preventing the active participation of women in Western patriarchies. Thus, those women attempting to subvert the male supremacist established order by ignoring the godly will would be ethically acknowledged as unauthorised thieves, usurping the supreme authority delegate power.

This recreated ultimate blasphemy performed by women would consequently be punished according to the severity of the transgression. Social ostracism has been deployed throughout history to isolate the Christian God's will violators and prevent corruption from infecting the community.

While this practice may seem rudimentary, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith dictated ex-communication penalty for those involved in the ordination of women by legitimate priests who would choose the female as relay for their evangelising mission.

Physical violence and assassination have also been practised to penalise women's attempts to assume the grace of the Christian God, as collated in Pope(ss) Joanne urban legend. In this cautionary tale, a woman disguises as a priest and infiltrates in the Church. The proficient woman in cover eventually becomes Pope(ss) and brings the corruption of sex to the elite of the institution by breaking celibacy. Her unexpected gravidity and labour in a middle of a liturgic procession (Ancient Origins, 2015) would reveal her identity and condemn her to a crude death.



4

*The illusive Popess Joan:
the black sheep amongst the abnegated*

Gender tensions revolve around the issue of male-exclusive ordination, which has been discussed to operate as a filter to facilitate the transition of a sector of the young male teenagers from their former lives at the private sphere to the active assumption of their providential responsibilities in society, while simultaneously impeding the evasion of their female counterparts from their houses by opting for the religious service.

The confrontation between the organic structure of the institution and those women who desire to turn their spiritual perspective of reality into a way of life is staged in the aforementioned urban legend narration.

As there is no possible peace for the evil, the subversive woman who assumes a male identity and reaches the top of the hierarchy is accidentally discovered to transgress the limitations devised by the patriarchal status quo for the female human upon her spontaneous labour during an outdoors ceremony (Rustici, 2006), which redounds into the capital punishment of both the transgressor and the fruit of sin she engendered.

The effects of such a cautionary narrative would still partially apply in the current days, since the non-lethal penalisation of the Canon Law for those found involved in female ordination is still in force, previewing ex-communication, the ultimate expulsion from the Catholic Church, for those ordained priests who assist women in the process of entering the institution, by implementing the sacrament of Holy Orders, and the female individuals who pursue to be ordained.

5

*The life, deeds and the exemplary death
of the woman who trespassed to be Pope*

By far, one of the most elaborate accounts on the life, deeds, and death of the forsaken Pope(ss) Joan, also referred by alternative denominations such as Pope Joan or Pope Joanne is offered by Hayes (2013). According to the author, at the very onset of ninth century, a baby, latter baptised as Joan, was born in the bosom of the



Anglicus family. This nuclear family, who lived in the city of Mainz, at the riverside of Rhine, in former Germany, would be defined by a significant progressist spirit.

Among the specificities of “the Anglicus” for the concession of such a consideration, the family parents are reported to provide basic education to their daughter. As readers may know, this befits an anomalous treatment to the female in the Middle Ages, being literacy exclusively reserved for the male members of the high nobility, and the clergy.

Instead, women could only participate in the church from the discreet veil of cloister nun congregations who followed the steps of Saint Paula of Rome, the founder nun of female monasteries, according to official Catholic sources (Vatican News, 2022). In spite of her, then, liberal family environment, the proficient girl, and later woman, acquired knowledge as a secondary and fully optional duty, being the satisfaction of house chores and family care an inescapable attribution.

Her revolutionary access to her family private library, which was a privilege for the few in the Middle Ages, allowed Joan Anglicus to become a self-taught lecturer, who delivered speeches and classes at the Cathedral School in the city, under the disguise of male clothes and the identity of John Anglicus.

As it may seem obvious, the talents of young Joan would not be acknowledged otherwise, since the unrestrained intervention of women in the public sphere, and, specially, in intellectual environments was interpreted as a subversive behaviour against the natural order established by the Christian God.

At a time yet to ascertain, Joan's parents are reported by Hayes (2013) to die. Such an event would be a turning point in Joan's life, provided the occurrence of the formerly loose father's custody decay. With a solid fortune legated by “the Anglicus” to their only heir, and the inexistent control by a male figure who replaces the male figure of reference, such as an adult brother, uncle or cousin, Joan is suggested to dispose of her prior identity, in order to leave her restrictive life behind. Hence, Joan decides to move to Athens, the acropolis cradle of the Western civilisation, where her male alter-ego identity progresses into the cultivation of her academic background.

Accidentally enough, the uncontrolled female is claimed to find a discreet lover who she could be her real self with. In her epistemological search, Joan moves to Rome, where she gains reputation as



lecturer. Her well-earned fame and salience lead Joan, described as an overambitious woman, to be chosen as the heir of Saint Peter's evangelic quest, upon the death of the Pope, who is estimated by Spycher and Habicht (2021) to befit Pope Leo IV, in 855.

Her unethical maintenance of her romance with the man she would have met in the then Byzantine Empire during her reputed papacy would be observed to violate the vow of chastity, assumed as an essential requirement for civil men to be ordained as religious servants in Catholicism, with fatal consequences for the multiple subversive woman. As related by Hayes (2013), Pope(ss) Joan would have managed to cover, not only her real gender identity, but also her pregnancy, probably aided by the long, loose papal tunics.

The brutal conclusion would occur during the performance of a special service, physically located in the Rome Lateran by *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2022), when Pope(ss) Joan would have given birth to a baby who was condemned, along with Saint Peter's successor to a cruel death penalty, which varies from alive cremation to being drowned in the Tiber or dragged by horses, depending on the accounts that elaborate on the event.

In all the urban legend derivations, Pope(ss) Joan is condemned to a crude and exemplary assassination to show the only end that awaits those women who plan to trespass the limits established by the male patriarchal establishment, where religion integrates a legitimising pillar. As theorised by multiple accounts, a small statue which depicts an anonymous woman in Rome's Via di San Giovanni would serve as a hint for the casualty Pope(ss) Joan suffered as a result from her reputedly excessive ambition.

Diachronically, there has been a candent fight between those researchers who have upheld the existence of the historical figure of Pope(ss) Joan's urban legend, and the institutional position of the Catholic Church. The institution specifically defends the narration to be a hoax fostered by the reformist activism, with obscure interests, to damage the reputation of the "sacred" institution at the Vatican City (Mondragón, 2019).

Notwithstanding the crossed accusations on the existence of such a historical figure of legend and the origin of the urban legend itself, it is in the sein of the Catholic Church where a conflict of interests may be found when it comes to the creation and promotion of such an ideological narrative.



In the Western Middle Age absolutism, the socio-political context where the uncertain urban legend was generated, government was deposited bilocally. The medieval King was the recipient of an unquestionable executive power, as ideologically defended to be the appointed of the Christian divinity to guide the fate of the population subject to his command with iron fist, and the assistance of the nobility, which supplied money for the megalomaniac political and bellicose desires of the absolutist Monarch in exchange of a preferential treatment.

On the contrary, the clergy operated as the tangible representative of the Divinity on the Earth and held the faculty to interpret the expression of the supreme supernatural entity, in order to give a sense to the world, from natural disasters to various events within the realm of the community. Additionally, the Catholic church self-attributed the power to oversee the morality of individuals, in interpretation of the doctrine of faith legated by the Christian God in the sacred scriptures and in the figure of the Pope, the relay of the apostolic mission of Jesus Christ and his followers.

While the regulation, promotion and censorship of the public and private morale may seem banal and unimportant, the control exerted by such a major religious authority shall not be mistakenly undervalued, being compared to historians, such as Norwich (2012), to the power hosted by the despotic medieval tyrants.

At the end of the day, the inquisitive guardians of the ethics did not only explain the strict absolutist hierarchy as the inviolable providence of the Christian God for humankind, but also regulated the ideological propaganda by means of physical and systematic censorship, which extinguished, with violence, all those beliefs, values and ways of living which reputedly contravened the ideal model of male chauvinist society.

The scarce data available on the creation of Pope(ss) Joan's urban legend does not permit to appoint the Catholic Church as the designers of this narrative. Nevertheless, the proliferation of Pope(ss) Joan's account would not have popularised and, thus, survived the passing of the time, if it was not sheltered by the connivence of the religious apparatus. The interest of the Catholic Church in the design of Pope(ss) Joan's urban legend, which would integrate a cautionary tale with verisimilar appearance to dissuade women from attempting to alter the established order by entering the public sphere as a full-right infiltrated, would not be the only clue to arise suspicion on the



potential ecclesiastic origin of the account. As afore discussed, in the strict structure absolutist monarchies, basic literacy and education was a privilege, only within reach of the highest strata of nobility and the upper clergy. Peasants and low-class slaves could not have assumed the authorship of the account, since they constituted the brute, illiterate, labour force who carried the burden of producing the goods the rest of the population consumed.

Out of these two privileged socio-political groups who could afford having access to education, it is the latter that exhibits a fluid command of writing, as monks were in charge of the copy of the few existing works, to produce facsimile versions for the conservation and extension of culture. Additionally, the highly exemplar ideological load revealed at the end of the urban narrative, where the trespassing woman and her “corrupted” and sinful prole are brutally murdered, would serve as yet another hint to its origins. Finally, the previously mentioned faculty of Catholic religion to regulate the moral and the conduct to observe by believers, suggest that it is in the former Vatican where the urban legend may have been sketched and elaborated on.

Literature and arts, as manifestations of culture, traditionally in men’s “hands”, would have further contributed to the expansion of the urban legend, along with the female-oriented cautionary load. Thus, in a sort of orchestrated ideological campaign, by the male supremacist apparatus would both justify the differential treatment to provide to the female collective and extinguish women’s aspirations an equal participation in public spaces.

By way of example, the casualty of Pope(ss) Joan was highlighted by fourteenth century reputed writer Boccaccio, in his *De Claris Mulieribus* (Boccaccio, 2021), where the novelist ranked Pope(ss) Joan in his one hundred list of famous women of all times.

Likewise, Italian artist Bernini, the founder of the baroque sculptural style, would have included some passages of Pope(ss) Joan’s urban legend in the Baldachin of Saint Peter’s Basilica, as explained by *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2022), which suggests the paramount relevance of the narration for the society of the times. Indeed, Bernini’s Baldachin would be a perfect artistic platform for the “democratisation” of this male chauvinist propagandistic instrument, which would permit the access of the illiterate populace to the story plot by means of a visual narration.



Another evidence of the importance of Pope(ss) Joan figure in the public imaginary of the medieval period would be found in the reputed existence of pieces of numismatics which would reputedly commemorate the life and deeds of this historical, just as controversial, woman. As Kemmers & Myrberg (2011: 89) explain, "Coins were never minted, used, deposited, retrieved, or studied in a vacuum. Every stage in the life cycle of a coin takes place within a context".

According to these researchers, the context of a coin comprises a three-fold entity which would befits "the coin's historical and ideological characteristics at the time of minting (primary context), its use (secondary context) and deposition (tertiary context)" (Kemmers & Myrberg, 2011: 90). The implication of the interaction of the historical and ideological features of the coin minting itself and its deployment by general population would somehow hint at the general acknowledgement of the entity depicted, either personal or institutional.

As confirmed by Kemmers & Myrberg (2011: 92), "the production of coins is in most cases linked to some kind of central authority" and, therefore, they are considered as "an excellent source not only for events and personas of the "big history" preferred within the history discipline".

In the numismatic repertoire collated by Ruckser (2020), where the coins designed for Popes until early seventeenth century are shown and described within their context, the author suggests a potential connection between Pope(ss) Joan's urban legend and the coins attributed to the Papacy of John VIII.

On the design of the coins above, Habicht et al. (2018:72) draw attention on the circular inscription in the inner crown of the coin, in the front (left side) which reads "Iohanis" in a fairly cryptic way due to the complex entangling and overlapping of the letters in the aforementioned location. Additionally, the inner circle of the rear of the coin, to the right, could interestingly display "Ioa" and a "P" for "Pontifex", a Latin designation for the highest priest in Jewish religion, as referred in the New Testament, later adopted as title for "a member of the council of priests in ancient Rome" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2022).

The inscription in the outer crown of the coin front, to the left, would read, according to Habicht et al. (2018:72), "SCS+Petrvs", in a reference to the controverted Pope's title "Successor + Petrus", which translates into contemporary English as the successor of (Saint) Peter, the first bishop in history. Later research by Spycher & Habicht



(2021) concludes that “real existing coins are generally accepted in archaeology to prove historical existence of someone”.

The historicisation of Pope(ss) Joan, as a legendary figure of dubitative existence stereotypes the female as a sort of medieval spy. The infiltrated woman into the male structures of the system would simply be a preliminary step for her to reach the top of major institutions of power and alter the system. The emergence of the story, with repercussions which reach out the current world, might be of special relevance in the context of the 1200s.

The antecedents of the inaccurate documentation of the legend arise are considered a pivotal point in the early feminist moment, where mystic nun Hildegard of Bingen, erected as the head of a public demand for the male chauvinist Catholic church to accept women’s ordination (Stanford, 2011: 170). Its success would permit the female to serve both the Catholic God and society with their effort to continue the evangelisation commenced by Jesus Christ.

The controversy opened by Bingen revealed a substantial contradiction where the system may have had some issues to ideologically justify, by means of logical arguments, the providential inability of the woman to serve the Christian God by means of priesthood, from the public sphere of the community. Female lack of diligence to serve the Christian God would be incompatible with the imposition of an unconditional service of the female, as any other citizen, to the “work” of the Christian God, which the male chauvinist indoctrinating apparatus would have resorted to for the narrative popularisation of the disobedient and trespasser female archetype in Pope(ss) Joan’s urban legend.

Thus, a reputational discredit on the figure of women would be recreated and fostered to legitimise the displacement of the female from the religious centres of power. Interestingly, such a strategy would remind of the depictional mechanisms deployed in *The Simpsons* animation-based narration, which will be reviewed in detail in chapter 8, to present female writing as a banal, yet subversive, source of conflict between the male social actors, which threatens the stability of the inner hierarchy of the patriarchy, and must, thus, be subject to social repudiation.

Specifically, the cautionary tale of a greedy woman, who surpasses the filters previewed by the male chauvinist establishment for her specific collective, under a deficient custody by the male figure of reference, illustrates her inevitable fatal end as the only possible destiny.



Her libidinous personality would comply with the persuasive Eve who ruins the Christian God's promise of paradise to humankind by means of seduction in *The Holy Bible's Genesis*. Lust eventually breaches her veiled front, which results in her corresponding torture and assassination. Thus, an alterity portrayal is offered. At one end, the over-ambitious woman with excessive self-stem on her intelligence to trespass the limitations of the system is prone to become a victim of her own weaknesses. At the other end, the natural leading male, with a cold-mind and the providential legitimisation to govern, ultimately restores the altered established order by imposing providential justice.

The initial thorough design of Pope(ss) Joan's urban legend by the intellectual elite of a majorly illiterate Middle-Ages population and the later diffusion of its male supremacist ideological encodings by means of verbal and visual-artistic means would not only be relevant by itself, in its contextual framework.

In fact, the urban legend, which would have extinguished without the tacit support of the medieval Catholic Church censorship and left no traces to follow in the twenty-first century, would have exhibited a remarkable flexibility, so the verisimilar narrative and its encodings are effectively adapted to the circumstances, values and approach to the world of its audiences across time. The time-specific adaptation of urban legends is denominated by Boureau (2011) as story persistence and treated as a defining feature of these accounts.

The current, remarkable, relevance of a supposed historical event which would have reputedly occurred in mid-nineteenth century is highlighted by Choi (2018), who claims Pope(ss) Joan's urban legend to integrate a "factor into modern arguments over the role of women in the church", when "the debate on female ordination in the church is still ongoing".

Stereotyping from tender age: the professional female muting

1

Formal occupations in the public sphere as a female trespass

The last of the three crucial public areas, which have historically been vetoed for the female sector of humankind and still exhibit severe restrictions for the conciliation of family care with their career, would be professional development. Professionalism is, indeed, an ever-present element in the life of every adult, provided the governing operative principles of contemporary human communities.

In order to understand the approximate weight of jobs in average population's life, the estimations by Gettysburg College at Pennsylvania defend that a third of an average human life is spent at work. Therefore, professional development must be assumed to have consistent repercussions in the happiness and life satisfaction of nearly any adult individual.

In a context where gender is the main criterion to select those members who are valid for the series of duties to fulfil in private and public environments, the ideologically attributed characteristics which conform the tissue of the stereotypical images that justify male leadership over female disadvantage stands as a versatile control mechanism. In such an environment, work is observed to be one of the major forces to spherify society into the micropolitical unit of the family and the macropolitics which govern the community.

Along with the intents to dissuade female individuals from any potential aspiration to thrive, by means of the previously contemplated cautionary tales with a focus on the consequences, the silencing of women is essential. Female writing may be resourceful to restrict the subversive potential of the voicing of the denunciation on their



unprivileged circumstances in the public professional spaces in favour of the females' corresponding male of reference.

2

The muting of the woman in the "Era of rights"

As opposed to traditional patriarchies, current Western supremacist establishments do not hold the explicit entitlement to censor women's freedom of expression. Its acknowledgement as a universal right that uniformly applies to every single individual, no matter their gender, race, sexual orientation, or any other relevant feature within the unique identity of a person, makes expression inviolable.

Provided the right-based obstacles posed by democracies, to the attempts of male chauvinism to displace the legitimate claims of the feminist movement since mid-eighteenth century, the patriarchy might be explored to deploy narratives to degrade the credibility of the female as professional writers. Thus, its protest load would be excluded from the literary canon *ad perpetuam*. Just as Spender (1980) defended, the male made the canon of consecrated literary works, which would account for the exclusion of the female from such collections. As satirically denounced by Schwartz (2019: 16), under the fictitious identity of a male writer, she only included white men in her work because "They're the most important ones. They are the most widely read, the most celebrated, the most influential, and, if I'm going to be blunt, the most talented".

To these regards, audiovisual serial animation narratives may be explored to be exploited by the supremacist ideological apparatus to create a manipulative portrayal of the female writing labour as an intellectually irrelevant production. Female writing, far from generating positive contribution to the progression of human communities, would interrupt the diligent rule of the providential male leaders, with severe repercussions for the operativity of society by serving as a source of conflicts between men. Thus, female writing would be tagged as a potentially threat to discourage and suffocate, by non-consumption, redounding into the indirect muting of the "writress" and their legitimate denounces.



3

*Stereotypes for kids:
audiovisual animation as indoctrinating texts*

According to this conception, audiovisual texts would include mass media filmic and serial fictional products, which characterise for their vast outreach and their acceptance among all sectors of population. Cinema and serial fictions currently hold a central position in the entertainment industry. As evidenced in the exponential growth of these products' usage trends, Nielsen Company (2020) consultants estimate the average US adult consumption of these resources, in four hours and fourteen minutes, a third of the total everyday media use.

The information collated by Nielsen Company (2020) arises awareness of the significant weight of series in both the overall life and the leisure time of citizens in the contemporary nations of the Western World. Notwithstanding this, the data produced on the media consumption trends during the first quartile of the year logically fails to predict the exceptional intensification of the presence of massive media resources in the routines of the population of the "Old Continent", as unprecedentedly distorted by COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemics gained the official recognition as a global alert on March 11th, 2020 (Cucinotta & Vanelli, 2020), even if there is evidence of its existence in the last term of 2019, as reported by Le Monde (2020) or Dilanian (2021).

As reflected on by Yagüe-Pasamón (2020), many European nations opted for the implementation of massive confinement policies to respond to COVID-19 global health crisis. Government lockdowns motivated the recurrence to home cinema and serial fictions, both in TV and streaming platforms, for consumers to cope with social distancing, isolation, freedom of movement deprivation and the abrupt interruption of individuals' lives.

On the whole, the relevance of both pre-confinement solid adhesion of Western populations to fictional mass media maintains unaltered after the decay of prophylactic lockdowns. Such a trend would have led agencies such as the Interactive Advertising Bureau (2016) to warn about the unedited TV series consumption quotas in the second half of 2010s decade, which has been attributed by Ort, Wirz and Fahr (2021) an addictive faculty.



The specific weight of audiovisual media in current Western entertainment, along with its portability and the recreation of a freedom of choice of contents by the target audience of these products, make TV series a highly influential vector of the ideological precepts encoded in their narratives. These narratives must be studied with the most scrupulous detail to observe how they may operate within their patriarchal socio-political frameworks to reinforce the governing stratification.

The potential of audiovisual mass media products for the vectorisation of the desired ideological precepts, as encoded in their corresponding narratives, is suggested by Hassan (2018: 1), who claims that “television is a penetrating medium, capable of creating false consciousness among the viewers’. The reported “power of media to shape people’s perception, beliefs, values and social relations” (Hassan 2018:2) would materialise in the exploitation which political, cultural and economic entities would make of audiovisual media, as denounced by Fairclough (1995).

Among media fictional products, animation has been studied to be particularly effective for the attainment of the influential objectives pursued by the aforementioned political, cultural and economic agents. Its effectiveness would be fostered, according to Huntington (2019), by the ability of animated characters to canalise feelings and ideas in pleasing and user-friendly ways. Hence, careful attention must be paid to the ideological encoding of animation within the framework of governing socio-political establishments.

4

The unrivalled success of the Simpsons’ animation

Within the vast repertoire of super-hit serial animations, it may well be asserted that *The Simpsons* occupies an undeniably privileged position due to its recording-breaking implantation in the house of millions of families, both in Northern America and overseas. The TV series was originally produced by FOX television channel and is currently hosted in Disney+ pay-to-play audiovisual entertainment repository, a selective business model which conditions its prevalence to the success of the products made available for their target users, as an alternative to live TV.



The enrooting of the product in its niche market is concluded, by research on the matter, to set a milestone in the way to rethink twenty-first century entertainment, due to its recruitment potential in serial audience. As reported by Huntington (2019), *The Simpsons* is one of the animation products with greatest impact, not only nowadays but in the whole history of the audiovisual industry. An approximate approach to the success of the series may be performed by means of the surveyal of the awards received by *The Simpsons*.

On the one hand, its influence, which transcends the barriers of several generations, may be explained by its status as the longest scripted show in TV history, which was already alluded by Hill (2012) at the beginning of the last decade, and still is in force at the time of writing. Since its first contact with the market, in 1989, thirty-four seasons have been edited and released on air. Interestingly, *The Simpsons* may hold its title for, at least, two years more, provided its renewal for seasons thirty-four and thirty-five, where Bart Simpson will celebrate his tenth birthday party for the thirty-fifth time and the TV-series will become, eventually, older than Homer Simpson itself (Weiss, 2022).

On the other hand, dozens of awards are rest on *The Simpsons* imaginary, yet tangible, podium. The reputed TV animation series has achieved an overall public recognition, throughout its thirty-four seasons, which will undoubtedly go down in history. To obtain an approximate picture to its overwhelming impact in the audiovisual entertainment industry, it shall be borne in mind that, as of May of 2023, *The Simpsons* has been awarded over 115 major awards and prizes. Such a prize inventory, which could be excessive for a regular house to host, would include eleven primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Animated Program, which reward the narrative salience of episodes and short movies. Other recognitions received include thirteen Annie Awards, thirteen WGA Awards, nine International Monitor Awards and a place in the Walk of Fame, at Hollywood. World Guinness Records also acknowledged the TV series as the longest scripted show in America, as aforementioned, and the TV series with most guest stars featured.

Such a peculiar serial animation does not only rely on the alluded institutional support. Audience has also shown its endorsement to *The Simpsons* by being recognised as the most famous family, being its popularity greater than the Royal Family of United Kingdom, as suggested by the results of a British poll at the turn of twenty-first



century, as reported by ABC News (2006). The Simpsons also made its own contribution to the English language lexicon, by popularising Homer Simpsons' complaint expression "D'oh", which was subsequently included in by one of the most prestigious lexicographic works, *Oxford English Dictionary*, in its 2001 version, as reflected by *The Telegraph* (2010).

When analysing the ideological precepts which might be vectorised by *The Simpsons*, it shall not be ignored that this serial animation relies on the recognition by researchers such as Huntington (2019) as one of the most influential mass media products in history, as availed by the numerous attainments. Among its vast list of achievements, *The Simpsons* stands as the longest-scripted show on air in the history of television, as indicated by Hill (2012).

The duration in the small screen is not the only milestone of this animation serial, having received the prize for the best TV show of twentieth century by *Magazine Time* (1999) at the turn of twenty-first century. Interestingly, its success has transcended the frontiers of the United States, as suggested by ABC News (2006), whose poll revealed that the popularity of *The Simpsons'* family overseas surpasses the British Royal Family's.

According to the general framework of values animation series are contextually influenced by, *The Simpsons* must be ascribed to is the fifth period of animation, which Bendazzi (2012: 2) uses to classify animation series since the Cold War. Animation from this period would stand out for its clear emphasis on the dramatisation of a polarised globe where the United States erects as the leader of the free, capitalist world, with a strong patriarchal white tradition, and the failed United Soviet Socialist Republics.

5

Simpsons and the gendered United States' family

Its ideological approach to the American family recurrently exhibits a flat, yet dynamic, community where the remarkably stereotypical nature of the characters contributes to create a gender-sectorised representation of the average American society.

The uniformity of the model of American community offered by *The Simpsons* and its potential extrapolative application to all the country is artfully achieved by the symbolism of the city of



Springfield. The onomastics of the denomination for the geographical setting of the city befits a common toponym in the United States of America, which is asserted by Rand McNally (2000) to designate thirty-four homonymous cities over thirty-four states in the “cradle of capitalism”. The location of *The Simpson’s* birthplace is hinted contradictorily, as a leitmotiv, in a great variety of chapters, in order to suggest that The Simpson community is the one which could be found nearly anywhere in the country.

Thus, the successful TV-series may present a prototype of Western capitalist society where the leader of the micro-socio-political unit of the protagonist family, Homer Simpson, complies with his obligation to contribute to the progression of the human group with his occupation. Homer Simpson performs as security chief at G-7 section in a crucial enclave for the provision of energy, as Springfield’s Power Plant would be, which keeps the modern society operative with nuclear energy.

On the contrary, the deuteragonist Marge Simpson would incarnate the stereotypical image of the abnegated wife and eternal housewife, who assumes, with no sign of reluctance whatsoever, her assigned roles of family care from home. As the family’s assistant, it is her duty to prepare her children to undergo an appropriate training in one of the key public spaces of society, the educational centres, so they may perform their prospective providential roles when they grow up. The most famous stereotype of the dependent wife, embodied by Marge Simpson, would comply with the expectations of the patriarchal establishment on women, offering an unconditional care to her husbands and sons from the discrete position she is reserved at the private sphere of her house.

Such a sectorisation reproduces, as a sort of mantra in the thirty-three seasons edited, a basic, ubiquitous, structural principle that presents, in its hitherto thirty-three seasons, the inflexible, gender-based, task division that hierarchises Western male chauvinist establishments. As a natural axiom not to be questioned, intergender breach in the Simpson’s society integrates a regular social ordering mechanism for the satisfaction of all the duties which run the community from a supremachist approach.

Such a systematic, gender-based, compartmentalisation, which consistently applies in *The Simpsons* narrative frame, would impose on young audiences, and throughout their lives, the supremachist structuration of the community as the natural arrangement in



Western societies. As shown by the models of femininity included in *The Simpsons*, the reclusion of women in the private sphere for the satisfaction of the family care attribution by the male chauvinist apparatus would become evident in “Homerazzi” (Groening et al, 2007), chapter sixteen from season eighteen.

In this episode, the contrastive roles of the male and female characters are, in fact, not only exhibited for the audience to contemplate and internalise. Occupational alterity is also explicitly reinforced by the wife’s ideological discourse, who establishes a homologic equivalence between her family look-after mission and men’s socially acknowledged duties. The naturalisation of the female performance at the private sphere, as the alterity activity of the woman in a gender bipolarised society, becomes explicit upon the decision by the Simpsons to buy a fire-proof safe.

Comically enough, in “Homerazzi” (Groening et al, 2007), the Simpson’s family decides to acquire a fire-proof safe to protect their most precious belongings from a potential casualty at home which paradoxically catches fire immediately after it is locked. Upon the destruction of their beloved valuables, Marge Simpson cries over the loss of her family album of photographic memories. The symbolic importance of her photo collection is noteworthy, as Marge acknowledges it to integrate “a record of my accomplishments” and compares it to the “resumé of a man.”

The naturalisation of unequal compartmentalised patriarchal societies, where attributions are assigned according to the gender of individuals and women are systematically ostracised to private spaces would be key for the maintenance of the gender breach that reserves leadership to the male collective.

As a concomitant phenomenon to the presentation of gender-spherified Western contemporary communities as the default format of society organisation, the post-confinement muting of the female social actors would operate for the effective prevention of women’s subversion of the patriarchal limitations in terms of action, which may be initiated by the public denouncing of their disadvantaged circumstances.

Instead, the voice of the female would be channelised by their referential male, the man unofficially assigned within the micro-sociopolitical unit of the family to custody the honour of the family. Family reputation, as analysed in chapters 7 and 9, is potentially lost by the indecorous conduct of the vicious women and protect both



society and female themselves from the side effects of their supposed incompetence.

The factual devoicing of the female by means of male expressive impersonation would specifically apply within the inner narrative frame of *The Simpsons* in the peculiar relationship of Homer and Marge Simpson. The former Homer assumes acts, on behalf of his family unit, in the public sphere, where he performs as security chief at the professional life of Springfield, from the Power Plant of the most searched and never located city of Northern America. Additionally, Homer operates as consumer, friend and interlocutor at the public micro-community Moe's tavern constitutes.

The aforementioned appropriation of the female expressive possibilities in the public sphere is explicitly exhibited in season 18, chapter 3, "Please Homer, don't Hammer" em (Groening et al, 2006), where Marge Simpson becomes a self-taught carpentry artist, as a way to tackle her routinary life boredom. Upon the assumption of her new occupation at the public sphere of professional development, Marge Simpson contributes actively to society by fulfilling the assignments by Springfield fellow citizens behind her husband's front.

The cover identity of the proficient creations' authorship is motivated by the ostracism of her male clients, including Superintendent Chalmers, Krusty "the Clown" and TV host Kent Brockman, some representatives of the economic power. The rejection of the female works by relevant male figures forces Homer to purport to be the author of the designs, so they are accepted by the clients. As acidly warned by TV-host Kent Brockman, if he got to discover that the furniture ordered was a female creation, he would turn it into a tomb for Homer's virility.

Simultaneously, Marge is patronised by the conservative sector of the female community in Springfield, such as Helen Lovejoy or Bernice Hibbert, proud wives of figures of socio-political relevance like the reverend and the head doctor at the hospital. Remarkably, these prototypical dependent ladies exhibit no aspirations beyond the enjoyment of their male-conferred positioning in the community. The patriarchal wives, who are interestingly favoured by the positioning conferred by their husbands' reputation, along with their compliance with the lady assignation provided by the supremachist establishment, are characterised by an intense banal and vicious personality, as expressed in their mean comments to Marge Simpson.



The female-to-female supremachist conceit portrays Marge Simpson as an assistant to her artist husband and a machine to provide sexual relief to Homer, while he embellishes the city. The female avail of the foundational supremachist theses is an essential factor in the fostering of the male chauvinist biased concerns on women, as it constitutes an own confirmation of the precepts projected by the patriarchal system on the female to relegate.

As borrowed from the outer narrative framework, a resourceful instrument for the silencing of the female expressive possibilities, which may only be fulfilled through the remote instrument of writing, provided the barriers that still hinder women's active incorporation in the public sphere, would comprise the female reputational exclusion from literature.

As previously explained, nowadays, the advances in women's rights, achieved as a result of the nineteenth and twentieth century feminist fight in the Western world, do not permit an explicit muting of the female, who would find in literature a platform for the denouncing of their disadvantaged situation, provided the respect demanded to the long-fought freedom of expression.

6

The naturalisation of gender stereotypes in the Simpsons ubiquitous community

As a leitmotiv in *The Simpsons*, narratives in audiovisual format are observed to be oriented at the destruction of the literary facet of the woman, who would produce parasitical literature, built on previously existing male literature in pursuit of the distortion of their virtuous creations.

Such parasitical works would operate as a source of conflicts between male social actors, in order to contribute to a loss of cohesion of the governing collective for a subsequent dismantling of the patriarchal system.

Hence, the presentation of the female literary production as a threat to prevalence of the Western structural male chauvinism would primarily damage the consideration of the potential repercussion of female's activities in the public sphere, while justifying the silencing-like ignorance to their writing.



As argued, advanced contemporary democracies do not hold the faculty to explicitly muting social actors, no matter the circumstances which characterise them, and, therefore, an ideological discredit must be summoned to compensate the “limitations” of the current communities and ruin the professional reputation of the female within their socio-political framework.

7

The denigration of the female professional reputation: the passive silencing of women in The Simpsons animation series

7.1 CONCERNS ON WOMEN’S LITERARY EXPRESSION IN “THE DIATRIBE OF A MAD HOUSEWIFE” an episode with special relevance in the TV series, as for the particular contribution to the vectorisation of discredit campaigns oriented at the denigration of the female writer, as a socio-political actor with a potential to subvert the male-leaned establishment, would be “The Diatribe of a mad housewife”, the tenth chapter of season fifteen (Groening et al, 2004). In this episode, the adult female protagonist of the series becomes, almost accidentally, a writer, as a sort of excuse for the supremachist establishment to reflect on their concerns on women’s writing and achieve similar effects to the active muting of the female collective, which is not feasible due to its incompatibility with the respect of the basic universal rights, as discussed before. In the narrative framework of this chapter, the audience could subliminally be suggested to ignore female writers, and their supposedly questionable reputation, by presenting them as the origin of socio-political confrontations between the male leading representatives for the dismantling of the supremachist establishments.

As previously discussed, the analysis of serial animation, as platform for the vectorisation of cartoon-channelised male supremacist ideological narratives, would be particularly interesting, provided the weight of these audiovisual products in consumers’ leisure time.

Specifically, in “The Diatribe of a Mad Housewife” (Season fifteen, chapter ten; Groening et al, 2004), a conceptual boycott to the reputation of female writing may be observed to be deployed with the



purpose of mutilating the expressive possibilities of women, who have found, in writing, an instrument to denounce their unprivileged circumstances. Such a complaint would integrate, by itself, an initial step to raise awareness on women's disadvantage, for a subsequent thrust towards the reclamation of gender equality as an essential requirement for actual democracy to exist.

As previously alleged, the male supremacist patriarchal establishment has progressively lost some of its controlling faculties. Such would include the Victorian-like silencing of the woman (Hughes, 2014), which lacks effective applicability due to inexorable advances of democracies and the materialisation of entitlement recognition into the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to freedom of expression.

Consequently, alternative means will be deployed to stereotypically ruin the reputation of female writers works and to invite spectators to ignore the female denunciations encoded in them, turning them into marginal works and a source a pernicious source of social conflict which can endanger the existing establishment. As exhibited in *The Simpsons*, season fifteen, chapter ten, "The Diatribe of a mad housewife" (Groening et al, 2004).

Female literary expression as an obsessive mirror of women's misandry

Within the narrative framework "The Diatribe of a Mad Housewife" constitutes, the ambition of the female figure of reference in The Simpsons family to transcend is deemed rather as a trespass. The violation of the range of action constraints projected by the male chauvinist establishment on women would originate in Marge's incursion in Bookaccino bookstore.

During an evidently random wandering around the ubiquitous city of Springfield, the Simpson's family, in absence of its male head, is accidentally met by the need of entering the shopping mall, for children to extinguish their basic-most physiological needs. Thus, the incursion of the female adult into writing is presented to be led by the need to occupy the urgency-generated free time and not by a transcendental quest of the individuals' soul to channelise her inner world into words for a relevant contribution to humankind.

It is precisely at Bookaccino bookstore, during of Esme Delacroix's public presentation of her last fictional work, *To Kiss a Scoundrel*, where Marge will awake to her desire to write a novel.

From the early intervention by Delacroix at the bookshop event, the conceit of the literate woman towards her male counterparts is



intensively summoned by Delacroix's literary production, were the conception of the man as "the scoundrel" recurrently appears, as a leitmotiv that structures her fiction collection.

Thus, the fame gained by the famous female writer is presented as the fruit of the exploitation of a universally unfair view on the man, focused on violence and detrimental habits with a destructive outreach beyond his close socio-political environment.

The obsessive criticism on the female, in Delacroix's 22-title "scoundrel" collection, would leave no room for a ceasefire in the historical gender tensions between the male supremacist static forces and the renovating gender-equality feminism, provided the female writer's exudation of hatred for men, illustrated in diverse aspects of life. The ubiquitous conceit of the literate woman could be observed in titles such as *Scoundrel Goes West*, *El Scoundrel*, *To Kiss a Scoundrel*, *Senator Scoundrel*, *Return to Scoundrel Island*, *To Hug a Scoundrel*, or *The Story about the Mighty Scoundrel*. As a summary headline of her literary production, the title *Anyone can be a Scoundrel* would serve as a rather sarcastic denunciation of the compulsive persecutory personality of the mad female writer to men, by the mere sake of being born male.

7.2 FEMALE WRITING AND THE PARASITICAL MANIPULATION OF THE MALE CANON The distortion of the canon in female hands would materialise in *Scoundrel in Scarlett*, which reminds of Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*; *Scoundrel Redux*, which may link to Trollope's *Phineas Redux* or *A Scoundrel in Araby*, which reminds of Mundy's *Affair in Araby*. Additionally, other masterpieces which would inspire Delacroix's works would include Becket's play *Waiting for Godot*, which is transformed into the female misandrist writing in *Waiting to a Scoundrel*. Thus, the presentation of the female's literary production as a source of plagiarism would encode a covert criticism which defines female literature as a spoiling of men's productions and a parasitical textual elaboration.

To these regards, the depiction of the consumers and supporters of the female literary production would be another ideological narrative resource to patronise all those who may be persuaded to embrace women's writing as a legitimate mean for expression in the public sphere, as observed in the overall characteristics of the attendants to the book launch event. At a glance, the narratee may perceive that the audience in Delacroix's presentation is mainly female, being only two highly stereotypical male profiles present at Bookaccino.



On the one hand, the brute and illiterate foreigner who migrates to the United States in pursuit of the American Dream and its “rag to riches” motto and is critically enough deceived by such an ideological construct, ending up stranded in the US society, is personified by Scottish Janitor Willie. Willie who would symbolise the ignorance of the feminist man who may uphold female expression. On the other hand, Hindu controlling husband Apu Nahasapeemapetilon would stand for the man who accidentally approaches female literature with no interest and the sole purpose of exercising his custody on the socio-politically dependent wife during her activities in the public sphere.

The exploitation of Delacroix’s obsession for men, as surveyed in her novel collection and the scoundrel leitmotiv, would, indeed, be merely one of the narrative strategies to depict female writing as a hypercritical, denigration-oriented, derivative literary production. In fact, there are multiple clues in the short animation text which hint at the need to actively silence the inequality claims by female writers, as a disadvantaged socio-political collective within Western patriarchies, by means of the ignorance of their compositions to let them suffocate by themselves.

7.4 WOMEN’S NEOPLATONIC SHORTAGES AND THE LEGITIMATE MALE AUTHORITY The analysis of the Marge’s Simpson literary adventure, which stems from the inspiration provided by Delacroix in the presentation of her last novel at Bookaccino, reveals, even before the initiation of the literary production, as a banal activity with a clear focus on the utilisation of trivial reader baits. Such a conception would encode a criticism to female writing, as opposed to the process of self-realisation based epistemological grounds with social repercussion literary composition is approached to be. The flatness of female writing may be surveyed, among other hints, in the conversational exchange between Marge and Delacroix, where the latter defends the motivation is the only asset required for a woman to succeed in the realm of literature.

Following similar ideological principles, the unimportant themes resorted to by female writing, which void any potential glimmer of knowledge within the female literary works, are discovered to be used “with joy” by the female writer. This representation would simply be a response to the Neoplatonic conception of the inherently vicious woman, as expressed in Marge’s misappreciation of the philosophical and ethical enterprise of writing, when she acknowledges that



the inclusion of “cuddles”, as a euphemism for sex, makes a valid marketing resource to attract readers and foster sales.

Within the framework of female writing, the simplicity of Marge, when it comes to the choice of the narrative elements to promote and avoid, would be further complemented by the basic nature of The Simpsons’ family female representative prose. The qualitative denigration of her production highlighted in the restrict lexical variety Marge exhibits in the first pages of her literary production. The recurrent phonemic alliteration of her composition, as voiced by Marge’s aloud narration of the introduction in the first chapter: “swim, swim, swim thought the whale, flapping its flappers”, is also a relevant feature in the denigratory campaign of women’s literature.

As discovered throughout the course of her novel elaboration, the female writer’s ignorance would not be simply limited to her practical abilities to compose. Indeed, the gender-based ignorance would also affect Marge’s lack of general culture and literary references. Marge’s ignorance is revealed when she pursues to find some inspiration in a boat cartoon made of few simple lines and plain colours that hangs from her wall. In her check-up of the picture, the amateur female writer fails to recognise a consolidated work in the male canon, which is asserted to befit a scene from Moby Dick in the caption inscription on the wooden frame of the pictorial work.

Interestingly, a clear contrast is established, by means of visual edition, between the simpleness of Marge’s source of inspiration and the realistic traits of the ship picture shown during a phone call at reputed male novelist Tom Clancy’s office, where he is verbally persuaded to involuntarily make a recommendation for Marge’s new novel. A similar strategy is used to obtain the endorsement of another male authority of the contemporary United States literary panorama, Thomas Pynchon, which suggests both male writers’ superior consideration within their industry due to their advanced skills.

Marge’s shortages in other metacognitive abilities, collaterally required for the completion of the task, would also be evidenced from the very onset of the activity, where the efforts and abilities implemented by the female deuteragonist in the creation process turn out initially fruitless due to Marge’s lack of concentration, which recurrently interrupts her composition. As a hint for distrust, such is the self-confidence of the female writer in her own skills that she exhibits her surprise when the eternal housewife manages to finish up her first paragraph and recognises it to be the fruit of a miracle.



7.5 MARGE NOVEL IS PUBLISHED... AND CONFLICT IS SERVED Remarkably enough, female literature would not only be product of the adoption of written composition, as mean of expression, by the historically referred as the weak sex, under the absorbing shadows of the deeply religious, neoplatonic, conception of women as the deviational incarnation of vice. Indeed, “at the despicable hands of women”, writing would not only target male as individual social actors with a reputation-led advanced status in the socio-political panorama. Instead, female writing would also host ideological stands oriented at the macro-subversion of the patriarchal stablished order, by serving as a source of conflict between the different models of male actors in the public sphere.

Within the narrative framework of *The Harpooned Heart*, the title chosen by Marge Simpson to denominate her first novel, the denigrating approach to men previously adopted by Delacroix in her “Scoundrel” collection is observed to replicate. Male deprecation would serve for the “eternal housewife” of the American animation as platform to express her conceit about her husband’s habits and their toxic relationship. In the aforementioned publication, an abnegated Temperance Barrows, represented visually in Marge’s imagination, by her own self, recreates a disgraced marriage with Captain Mordecai, Homer Simpson’s alter ego, who exhibits a severe addiction to alcohol and a lean to resolve his issues in the public spheres with his disgusting manners and violence before words.

The resigned housewife’s need to escape her unmertry sentimental relationship with the brute whale hunter would lead her to look, beyond the walls of her home prison, for an alternative model of sensitive, less belligerent masculinity, in a flirty romance between Temperance and Cyrus Manly, a character inspired in the non-imposing next-door neighbour, Ned Flanders.

However, the supposedly unsensible conveyance of her laments on her husband, along with her unconsciously canalised preference for her real-life neighbour, creates a dispute between the two models of male leading figures. The male conflict compromises the stability of the male chauvinist tissue by causing the literary death of the two models of masculinity and the physical integrity of the two men outside *The Harpooned Heart* narrative frame.

Eventually, the resolution of the conflict occurs when Marge concedes to assume the patriarchal assignation for women in the male supremacist establishment and becomes the assistant and “cook” for



Homer in their detective investigation to unveil the actual identity of US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy's murderer, assassinated in the course of a public event in Dallas, in 1963.

“He did it for a reason”: laundering reactionary masculinities in news

As detailed in previous chapters, the maintenance of the gender breach supremacist establishments are based on could require the implementation of social control instruments. Such mechanisms would either impede or, in the most optimist scenarios, hinder the full-right incorporation of the female individuals into the three realms the public sphere of the community may be divided into.

Hence, the male chauvinist ideological propaganda has been studied to deploy urban legend narrations, such as Pope(ss) Joan’s cautionary tale, to warn women against the lethal consequences of contravening the supposed godly will to exclude them from the religious hierarchy.

Similar mechanisms have been explored to operate in animation products, like renowned *The Simpsons* TV-series. In the case of this unrivalled animation product, men are persuaded not to socially acknowledge the professional labour of female writers, provided its ability to alter the ideological precepts which have traditionally justified the relegation of the women to the house for the performance of intra-community duties. Otherwise, female denunciations could contribute to change the establishment from the inside for the attainment of equal professional opportunities and entitlements disregarding the individuals’ gender.

Control on women may be required to keep the female within the sociopolitical frontiers designed by supremachism to preserve its peculiar unbalance. To these regards, there must be a complementary ideological conceptualisation campaign which matches the official stereotypical image of women to bilaterally justify the displacement, confinement and denial of entitlements of the female.

Simultaneously, the privileged positioning of the leading male and their salience, on the ground of their natural biological and personality equipment to satisfy the duties the progression of the



human communities entail, must be both conceptually represented and physically incarnated by visible figures.

1

When alterity turns into flesh: Will Smith at the Oscars 2022

The creation of a diametrically opposed image of the female, based on overemotionalism, unreliability, inability and inclination to vice and deviation, has been mentioned to contrast with men's physical and emotional strength and a natural proneness to rule numerous human groups with diligence, virtuosity and justice. The power of the contrastive views on men and women to delimitate the range of action of those members of society who are considered not to be fully functional is first theorised by Simon De Beauvoir in *The Other Sex* ([1949] 2015).

In her edge-breaking monograph, where De Beauvoir reveals as one of the capital authorities in feminist studies, she hints at the deployment of the alterity, the contrastive definition of both gender groups, as a basic mechanism for the bipolarisation of the community into public and private sphere, and the subsequent distribution of tasks and perks, with gender as the only allocation criteria.

To these regards, the enhancement of the socio-political consideration of men over their female counterparts may be observed to be achieved by means of multiple mechanisms. On the one hand, television, and live broadcasting stand for platform for audiovisual texts with massive consumption by a great sector of the population.

Consequently, the selection and filtering of the desired ideological precepts to be conveyed, by means of the retransmission of explicit verbal messages and metamessages which might derive from the contemplation of behavioural trends, may contribute to visibilise, and naturalise interpersonal interactive conducts. Simultaneously, the values associated to the dynamics of power in interaction may be romanticised through guided interpretations, as imposed from outside the witnesses' first-person perception.

To paraphrase it in a simple way, what is not shown does not apparently exist. When applied to the particular context of the supremachist enhancement of men's reputation, television and live broadcasting services may be observed to reinforce the traditional patriarchal male-oriented vision of the world by exhibiting toxic



masculinities in action. The interested manipulative presentation of reactionary masculinities may reveal an attempt to justify and even legitimise the intolerable.

In this chapter, the casualty that astounded the globe on March 28th, 2022, amidst the celebration of the most reputed cinematographic prizes, the 94th Academy Prizes, is studied to discover the potential repercussions their metamessages may generate when conveyed to its mass-scale target audience. Thus, the gala in recognition of the trajectories and achievements of relevant members in the world cinema industry, which are not limited to actors and actresses but to all those professionals who participate in the creation of filmic texts, from the soundtrack, image or edition to the best director, was partially ruined by an outburst of violence.

In particular, Will Smith's slap to comedian and host of the event, Chris Rock, is generally acknowledged as a reaction to a long-discussed offensive joke addressed to the actor's wife, actress and entrepreneur Jada Pinkett on the alopecia areata. However, the resonances of such a fortuitous event may be explored to potentially contribute to the offering of codes and values to interpret and interact with reality.

Such an effect would be especially successful when dramatised by highly influential social figures, as the case of renowned actor and producer Will Smith, who is deemed by Rutherford (2018) as a top influential actor and the most powerful in the cinema industry according to Smith (2007). The public figure's importance of ideological vector stems from his ability to inspire millions of cinema followers and fans worldwide to incarnate the values the actor has been contaminated with, as a result of the fictional characters he has brought to life in the movie theatre. His life outside the "wide screen" would also exhort fans to fight to attain the living conditions of luxury, recognition and suspiciously perfect joy they exhibit to enjoy.

Thus, the combination of the massive outreach of television and broadcasting platforms with the influential character of the celebrity would multiply the conveyance of a shameful exhibition of the controlling and violent model of masculinity to unrequestedly defend Jada Pinkett's honour.

The ideological legitimisation of a preliminarily execrable action would materialise in the gratefulness speech Will Smith delivers. When granted the 2022 prize for the best actor, Smith's reaction is publicised as a part of his godly providential assignation, according



to which the actor must impose justice and enlighten the society with his actions.

As previously mentioned, the recalcitrant masculinities broadcasted would not simply enhance the image of the male, as an isolated entity to justify their government over the rest, but in comparison to the range of action of the female, in order to reflect on gender contrastive conduct and the implications which derive from them, resulting, thus, into the compartmentalisation of society into public and private spheres.

On the one hand, Smith's behaviour would incarnate an example of dominant masculinity, where the male integrates the representation of the macho, who feels compelled to respond for the dependent members of his micro-sociopolitical unit, the family.

Therefore, in the compliance of his providential duty, the male figure of reference, either husband or father, would make use of brute force for the protection of the individuals he custodies. In a sort of renovated version of the medieval honour retrieval, men would be the only salient authorities with enough power to compensate for the offence received by a relative, which may redound into the staining of the family name. The male restorative quest would translate into the imposition of the sense of justice emanating from the will of the Christian God.

On the other hand, an apparently impassible Jada Pinkett would be targeted by Chris Rock's humiliation in a public event which relies on the attendance, both physically and with the assistance of media, of millions of people.

Hence, a clear alterity contrast may be observed between the activity of the male, whose duty would not limit to the resolution of his own issues but, by extension, to the problems suffered by the rest of the members of the micro-community under his control, and the silent lady, whose will is expressed, with no previous consultation, by the controlling husband.

Consequently, society is served a reactionary exemplary, and highly influential, model of gender-based interaction where men step into action, deliver justice, and impose their authority to restore the socio-political order. In the meanwhile, women remain silent, even in those cases where they integrate the object of the offence.



2

The limitations of live audiovisual ideologisation

The ideological publicisation of the male actors, as assisted by the influential character of live and broadcasted audiovisual texts in pursuit of the laud of their socio-political consideration, would justify their salience in the public sphere of society. Provided the perks and advantages intrinsically associated, the broadcasting of male salience is discovered as a fairly extensive indoctrination resource with a great potential to naturalise the existence of the patriarchal gender breach.

The specific influence written press, as a tool of the supremacist apparatus to manipulate the population's values and sustain the gender breach to maintain the patriarchal socio-political structuration is to be observed in the informative production which stems from the 94th Oscars Awards Ceremony. In spite of the variety of positive anecdotes to report on, news lamentably centred on Will Smith's slap to Chris Rock over Jada Pinkett's alopecia joke.

The unexpected physical encounter between the Hollywood actor and the gala host in 2022 has been alleged to aim to defend Jada Pinkett from the public scorn witnessed by "tens of millions" (Seisdedos & González, 2022), and became a phenomenon of global participation in few seconds, as amplified by mass media formats.

The accurate audience of the event, as retransmitted and reported by the variety of mass media which made the scene available for later watching and reading, is impossible to estimate. However, an approximate picture may be obtained when the key terms "Will Smith Chris Rock" are entered in the browser of the currently greatest online video storage YouTube.

To these regards, one of the videos hosted by the aforementioned platform which concentrates most attention by internauts is "Watch the uncensored moment Will Smith smacks Chris Rock on stage at the Oscars, Drops the F-bomb". This audiovisual resource published by *Guardian News* (2022) has been watched by ninety-eight million users. Other massively reproduced videos would befit "Will Smith SLAPS Chris Rock at Oscars 2022", by Entertainment Tonight (2022) which was played over twenty-three million times. The same number of viewers checked "Will Smith breaks down in Oscars 2022 speech after hitting Chris Rock", which offers the aftermath of the attack.

Virtual reality would have transformed the event into an audiovisual immersive experience, as observed in MVR's (2022) "360°



VR- Will Smith SMACKS YOU! Chris Rock POV Oscars,” a mobile virtual reality video hosted by YouTube. By means of this interactive resource, 9.7 million users were given the opportunity to become the protagonist of the aggression from a first-person perspective. Such a consumption trend suggests the attraction of the overall audience to the casualty at the 94th Academy Awards ceremony.

3

The written press as semipermanent ideological recipient

Nevertheless, readers shall note that, despite the undisputedly massive outreach of television and broadcasting platforms, not all the audience may have immediate access to the ideological contents conveyed by means of these media. Likewise, the timetable availability of the audience, which stems from the leisure time that is not covered by either professional or private obligations, may not match the time slot reserved by the platform to the retransmission of the event.

Therefore, a clear need to complement the effects of the aforementioned audiovisual ideological campaign may be revealed, in order to maximise the resulting adherence to the supremachist precepts intended to promote.

The temporal availability of live broadcasting audiovisual texts poses multiple limitations, which do not only affect the extend of the expansion of the desired values, but also to the consolidation and enrooting of the messages into the target audience’s precepts repertoire.

The addressees’ reduced exposition to both the gender-specific interactive dynamics and the verbal apology for the validity of the messages associated to them, with the aim to endure the spherification of patriarchal communities, could compromise its effectivity and, therefore, written alternatives may be deployed to compensate the shortages of on-screen scheduled formats.

Attending to the peculiarities of the textual format, written genres present a reduced volatility, where the availability of the product for consultation is intimately connected to the preservation of the recipient itself. Notwithstanding the solidity of written formats over ephemeral audiovisual alternatives, there are other major factors which would justify the suitability of writing for the vectorisation of ideological precepts.



Indeed, the indoctrinating faculty of written genres has long been reflected on as an intrinsic characteristic that would stem from its own creation process. Textual elaboration comprises, more often than not, a careful design process where the initial proposal is elaborated and, subsequently, subject to various additions, omissions, circumlocutions, paraphrasing and proof-reading. The outcoming product may preserve the initial communicative essence but intendedly exhibits an appropriate linguistic framework, according to the characteristics of the context where the text is designed to operate and the background of the target audience who the text is addressed to.

In the particular context of the 94th Academy Awards, Smith erects as model of the active "macho" who restores his family's reputation with violence and displaces his humiliated wife to a silent place where Pinkett would be entitled not to express herself freely on the casualty. The polemic on the case has stimulated a global reporting of the event by means of informative texts, commonly referred under the label of news, which is observed to contribute to the laundering of the Smith's public image.

The justification of the aggressiveness shown at the Oscar's gala, as a milestone for the defence of the common wellbeing, reveals an exploitation of the professional criteria of recognised figures in the establishment. Such mechanisms aim to transform preliminarily suspicious opinions into difficult-to-question facts upheld by the objective procedures which supposedly guide professional praxis.

4

Public opinion influence in opinion statement: the particularities of news

As suggested, one of the most evident instances of written narratives, as ideological artefacts with a thorough design of the text, is news, the informative text by excellence. Preliminarily, the piece of news results from a frequently intensive process of writing, polishing and correction with the sole goal of suiting the contents to the communicative and intentional needs to the endorsers' conveniences is news.

The manipulation of the text has recurrently been observed to hold the faculty to convey paradoxically opposed reality from the same informational basis, as seen in the treatment of early August 2022



negative result in Kansas' referendum to restrain female abortion entitlement.

The overall outcome of the votes casted by the United States' region population is simply undeniable. Fifty-nine percent of the 922,321 votes opted for "no" as answer for the consultive question "Should the Kansas constitution be amended to remove protections of abortion rights?", as reported by *The New York Times* (2022).

However, readers from all over the world are served different realities when the inherently manipulative news elaboration process steps into action. Such an interesting phenomenon becomes evident upon a contrastive approach. On the one hand, left-leaning accounts (Gowen & Itkowitz, 2022) at *Washington Post* emphasise the voters' rejection to the restriction of rights. Cohn (2022) at *Huffing Post* also celebrates the result as a stunning victory. On the other hand, Morris (2022) at conservative *Fox News* would allude to a rejection to the constitutional mechanisms in the event reporting.

The necessity to draw my readers' attention to the construction of news with supremacist indoctrination purposes is connected to the long-debated influence of these informative texts in its target audience. According to the late twentieth century theory by Noelle-Neuman (1974), where the spiral silence is discussed, there is a tendency for individuals to scan the surrounding environment for signs and traces of opinion.

Thus, news could build on this humans' natural instinctive pursuit to offer desired opinions which satisfy the audiences' demands for opinion. Indeed, as suggested by Gunther (1998), news contents exert an influence on the direction of public opinion.

The multiplicity of instances of news-related influence is evidenced by the perlocutionary effects of news, as discovered by research on the matter. According to Pfefferbaum, Newman & Nitiema (2014), anxiety is reported as a common casualty that is reported to derive from the audience's exposition to news. As complemented by Dougall, Hayward & Baum (2005), stress would also be found among the list of repercussions news has on the readers' mood. Likewise, researchers Ahern, Galea & Resnick (2002) would establish a connection between certain news and the occurrence of depression in their consumers.

Ideology could also be directed as desired by the socio-political agents behind written press. As confirmed by McCombs and Reynolds (2002: 2), "the information provided by the news media plays a key



role in the construction of our pictures of reality". Such an assertion supports McCombs & Shaw's (1972) hypothesis that "mass media set the agenda of issues for a political campaign by influencing the salience of issues among voters".

Likewise, Carey & Burton (2004) studied the combined effect of the exposition to pro- and anti-European newspapers in UK and readers' adscription to liberal and conservative political parties respectively as a source of ultimate influence of voters' opinions on the European Union at the turn of twenty-first century.

In the framework of the mass media globalisation of Will Smith's physical assault, press, as an instance of carefully prepared narrations with embedded ideological encodings and a proved potential to alter the audience's perception on reality, would have played a quintessential role. This dynamic is confirmed by the importance provided by *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* and *USA Today*, the three United States' newspapers with greatest daily circulation (Turvill, 2022), to the event, by devising, in its cover, a privileged place to Will Smith's aggression, along with reports on the Russia-Ukraine battle over Mariupol.

5

The intentional communication formula in news design: manipulative information management

When regarding the potential outreach of subliminal messages in news, as a textual genre with informational purposes, it may be asserted that there is a rather ubiquitous insertion of ideological loads which are unconsciously inspired by the writers' personal, academic and cultural backgrounds in the informative essence of the text.

Additionally, specific concerns would be strategically introduced by the text endorser, in the course of the elaboration process in order to exploit the manipulative possibilities of influential editorial platforms to shape the public opinion.

Therefore, it might be necessary for readers to analyse, with utmost criticism, the balance between fact-checked information contained by any piece of news, and the representative approach and symbolism utilised by the text writers to manipulate the message, referred by Austin (1968), in his conceptualisation of the acts of speech, as the locutionary force of communication. On the other



hand, the balance of the information and writer's introduced locutionary load would pursue to control and foster the performance of the desired communicative effects on the addressee, which was labelled by the reputed linguist (Austin, 1968) as "perlocutionary force".

Thus, the calculated perlocutionary manipulation, as performed by the intentional load of the locution, would satisfy, to greater or lesser extent, the illocutionary force of the speech act, theorised by Austin (1968) as the intentional load communicators include in discourse to obtain the pursued effects.

When extrapolated to the specific acts of communication performed by news, the reproduction of information reports on reality may be observed to be homogeneously ornamented with non-apparent, extra-informative loads of verisimilar pseudo-information which shapes the resulting piece of news to the very convenience of the communicative pursuits of the endorser.

The manipulation of information would be performed with the assistance of focus placing strategies and the selection of the data presented to the addressee as exact, by means of oversimplification, omission, disinformation. Thus, the alteration of media manipulation resources may adjust substantially the balance between the illocution, the term coined by Austin (1968) to denominate the writer or reporters' intentional load; the locution, or message; and the perlocution, or communicative repercussions on the addressee.

The differential treatment of the same reality by diverse sources according to the communicative intentions on the addressee may be observed in the context of the Russian offensive on Ukraine. The military campaign recognised world-wide as a rather unilateral invasion led by Vladimir Putin to coup the former Soviet Union satellite republic, as observed in Harding & Sabbagh's (2022) article in *The Guardian* (2022).

Such an approach would be diametrically opposed to *Rossiia 24* news bulletin, as denounced by Shevchenko (2022), who explains that the government-controlled TV program would alter the former equation by placing Ukraine as the invader, and a threat to the institutional and territorial integrity of Russia.

While this particular example illustrates the purposeful alteration of the reality, by means of its retransmission, in the current world military operations panorama, the initiatives behind the design and dissemination of any given ideological campaign are multiple



and respond to an endless variety of motivations, being one obscurer than the previous one.

In general terms, news may be observed to have an indisputable potential to orient the sensitivity and tolerance of the public opinion towards to the governing and ever-emerging forms of social structuration.

To these regards, readers should keep in mind that textual ideological campaigns, on manipulative bases, have been traditionally utilised by the male supremacist apparatus for the endurance of their socio-political salience within Western communities. Likewise, textual ideological campaigns have served for the justification of its particular, gender-based, social stratification, by legitimating the assumption of power by the male leading figures. Legitimation also steams from the defence of the displacement of individuals by the mere sake of being born under the "XX" chromosomic configuration, on the ground of their natural deviational character and their unfoundedly claimed physical and moral inferiority.

6

The exploitation of pre-existing mental schemes and individuals' proneness to ideologisation

The male monopoly use and abuse of the major textual genres across history in Western patriarchies, as the only valid socio-political interlocutor in Western male supremacist establishments, extended until the progressive irruption of the feminist waves since late nineteenth century. Exclusive supremacist control of writing would respond to the spherification of society which stems from the gender-based task division followed, as principle for structuration, in the process of complex hierarchisation of the then-growing early human communities.

Boys and men, both as prospective and later factual leaders of the Western patriarchies, were educated, until the mid-to-late twentieth century, to participate actively in the professional, politic and religious areas of the public life, being thus reserved the exclusive privilege of access to learning. The access to literacy progressively democratised for the male population with the advent of enlightenment and the human stepping into modernity.

News was no exception to the utilisation of writing to assist the supremacist power structures in their quest to endure male prevalence



by imposing their mission as a providential duty stemming from a supernatural unquestionable entity.

Likewise, the male supremacist views on society as a highly compartmentalised system of human organisation; and values to praise, identified with the male authority, and despise, which were typically associated by alterity to the female and its supposedly natural weaknesses, would operate as strong pillars for the writing-based legitimisation of the patriarchal socio-political structuration.

The discovery of news as current instruments for the endurance of the patriarchal status quo, as traditional system for socio-political structuration, in the reporting of news on actor Will Smith's physical assault on TV-host and comedian Chris Rock in 94th Oscar prize gala, upon the public humiliation of Jada Pinkett exhibits some interesting aspects.

At a glance, the relevance of a firm condemnation of the aggression performed by the Hollywood celebrity should not be dismissed, regarded the alluded actor's will to restore his wife honour, which constitutes the pivotal point of a die-hard Middle Age approach to life and family, as reported by Berger (1970). As recalled by Zurro (2022), one of the obsessions of Will Smith would, indeed, be a cohesive traditional family.

The universalisation of education in the Western world as a basic right placed peaceful resolution of confrontations as the adaptative alternative to physical violence. Ever since then, violence is strongly repudiated by mass media, governmental corporations and the general population mass.

However, the deployment of physical strength to impose one's vision, values and justice, when implemented by influential celebrities, such as Will Smith, could endanger the consensus reached on individuals' entitlement to a violence-free coexistence, by inciting followers to assume reactionary responses for the hierarchising imposition on other members of the community.



7

*News in action: the neutralisation
of Smith's liable performance*

7.1 THE WEIGHT OF RECOGNISED OPINION IN THE VERSIONING OF AN INTOLERABLE REALITY As elaborated in chapter 10, TV-based, streaming and video retransmission of Smith's assault permits the remote attendance of the audience to the Oscars 2022 casualty with relative manipulation, except for a potential edition of the scene for the selective exhibition of images.

By contrast, the narration recreated in the news-based account constitutes a mediated, yet verisimilar, reporting of the event where readers accept the reality described by the trustee journalist or editorial group as a fact, manipulative insertions, omissions or alterations embedded. Such a narrative potential, which offers room for a calculated manipulative ideologisation, would, thus, compensate the informational disadvantage of news, as compared to the outreach of the audiovisual media previously mentioned.

The examination of a varied pieces of news which covered the physical attack of Smith on Rock, in major languages of the contemporary Western world, including English, Spanish and Portuguese, permits to observe the justification of supremachism in informative texts, which would rely on two sources of socio-political legitimisation from the public sphere.

On the one hand, journalism would have been observed to make, by means of opinion statement, a direct laundering of Smith's reputation. The author's public image resulted severely damaged after his unmediated choices at the Academy Awards 2022. At this point opinion would have been deployed as a resource to guide the news readers' impression of the assault.

An instance where such a strategy would operate would be represented by SeisDedos and González (2022) "Smith makes Oscar History after slapping Christ Rock over joke about wife", where an intolerable attack from one public figure to another celebrity is, far from being subject to censorship, approached as a deed.

Such a phenomenon may also be observed in its context in the fierce legitimisation of Smith's performance by Roig (2022). The Spanish right-leaning journalist (Roig, 2022) rules out the criticism on the movie star initiative to retrieve Pinkett's honour as



a side effect of the politically correctness taken to the extreme by the “Woke Generation”. According to Roig (2022), “wokes” are depicted as the imposers of the culture of cancellation, who, as the author proceeds, would be mere “retarded clueless individuals amputate their common sense in virtue of a faked dignity to feel morally superior to those who do not agree with them”.

7.2 PROFESSIONAL CRITERION PERVERSION: AT THE SERVICE OF THE POWER APPARATUS interestingly, the professional criterion from other areas of the public life, as upheld by the reputation of science and knowledge, would also be summoned for the provision of a verisimilar, trust-worthy aspect to the manipulated informative text.

By way of example, such a phenomenon could be observed in the news account by Young and Hass (2022), where the pivotal point is integrated by the consultation of Psychologist Doctor Saad’s scientific opinion on the physical encounter between Smith and Rock. As defended by Doctor Saad, Smith’s reaction to Rock’s unfortunate joke befits a desire “to protect and restore respect” for Jada, even if the actor’s will would have not been materialised in the most appropriate way.

According to Dr. Saad criterion, Smith would have “felt as a husband who needed to protect her [wife], and the best way to protect her was to disrespect back.” As subsequently discovered, Dr. Saad’s opinion would be guided by the male chauvinist myth on the gender-based task division of society, where the male would have to exert an effective custody of the female members of the family unit he would lead.

Such a concern may be illustrated by Dr. Saad’s contribution, claiming that “someone who goes and hits someone to protect the respect of your wife is somebody who wants good in the world. It’s not somebody who wants violence [but] a gesture of love for his wife.” As she further proceeded (Young and Hass, 2022) in her fierce defence to the Hollywood movie star, “This is a man who wants a loving world and felt that this was so not loving”.

Interestingly, Will Smith has received the attention of all media, due to his explosiveness before millions of spectators. In any case, readers must not forget that the actual patient of the humiliation by the Gala host has rather been neglected, in an attempt to stress the second importance of the voice of women in a public “game” to be played by the male actors.



Indeed, the few accounts which placed the focus on the verbally assaulted, Pinkett, denounced Pinkett's criticism on her husband brutality (Arab News, 2022). As detailed, Pinkett's behaviour would have dissatisfied the expectations on an unconditional defence to the actions performed by the male authority she would depend on *American Journal News* (2022).

Such consideration would be in accordance with the principles of socio-political structuration of family units in patriarchies, and the conception of the family honour as the centre of the micro-sociopolitics of Arab families (Dodd, 1973), values which were high in force until late Middle Ages in the West but seem to still operate nowadays.

The professional criterion of law professionals would also evidence to be resorted to by the leadership-enduring male supremacist differential conceptualisation of the man and the woman, as illustrated by the news reporting of the event made by Hafemann (2022). In this informative text, the lawyer depicts the film star's brutal reaction at the 2022 Oscars gala as “a beautiful example of legitimate defence of the honour of a third party” .

The utilisation of professional criterion for the laundering of reactionary beliefs remind of other reputed examples from other areas of knowledge, as in the case of writers Pease and Pease (2001), who are believed resort to flat stereotypical representations of the man and the woman which contribute to socio-political statism.

Toxic masculinities with a global antenna for mouth and influencer hands

1

Behavioural learning from mass inspirational celebrity models

As opposed to news, the audiovisual retransmission of Will Smith physical encounter has a strong appearance of transparency, as no mediation is appreciated to bound the audience's sensitive perception and the action itself. However, a clear ideological component might be discovered in the interactive dynamics established between interlocutors in public or private, but exposed, social situations.

As previously discussed, Bandura's theory (1977) on learning places procedural observation at the centre of the learning process would explain the influence individuals may have in those who witness their behaviour. Therefore, a pernicious behavioural replication could derive from contemplation of the models who comply with the gender-specific expectations imposed by Western patriarchies, which have previously been analysed to defend the salience of men in the public spheres of professional, political and religious realms, where the males' self-attributed leadership would materialise. Those women forced to assume house chores and family care assistance roles, of secondary importance, from their houses, and remain quiet and obedient during their brief incursions in the public spaces, would be deprived of their right to express themselves, as men would channelise their voice and will, and would "absorb" her decision-making power.

In the particular case of Will Smith uncalled retrieval of Jada Pinkett honour upon her humiliation by Chris Rock at the 94th Academy Awards ceremony, the roles assumed by the three participants in the



event, along with the interactive dynamics, both explicit and subtle, will be studied in pursuit of the discovery of the models of masculinities and femininity inspired onto the massive audience of the events.

Finally, the imposition of the desired structuration of society by means of the exposition of audience to procedural observation of the models of socio-political agents involved in the lamentable joke on Pinkett's alopecia and the up-following assault by Will Smith will be regarded within the peculiar framework of the Oscars 2022.

In such an unprecedented event, the models offered by the charm of Hollywood millions of fans would aspire to attain and, specifically, by movie star Will Smith, who incarnated in the wide screen powerful superheroes admired by a wide sector of the regular population, would multiply the expected indoctrinating perlocutionary effects on the audience due to the influential power celebrities are studied to hold and exercise.

The weight of cinema, both in contemporary entertainment and in its users' opinions and perception of the world, is to be attributed to the collapse of the frontier between consumers' reality and high-impact fictional worlds, which permit the audience to temporarily transcend the physical and conceptual limitations of the world they dwell.

Notwithstanding this, the enrooting of the cinema in the Western World transcends its mere contribution to current entertainment, provided the evasion door to ideal realities it offered to identity crisis brought about by the Great Depression, and World War I and World War II veterans, who desperately needed to escape the horrors lived in the global conflicts to defeat the invasion of German Nazism and Italian fascism in the "Old Continent".

The unrivalled positioning of the "wide screen" in the entertainment industry, where it shares place with television, streaming and video platforms, and videogames, entails an indisputable influence on the target audience which has been analysed by a great multiplicity of researchers. By way of example, Hawkins & Pingree (1981) defends the occurrence of an identification of spectators' personality and personal background with the heroes and heroines the master pieces at cinema exhibit.

Additionally, Behm-Morawitz & Mastro (2008) theorised on the influence of the gender models shown in movies, which would be especially pernicious in the case of young audiences. Recently, Do Nascimento (2019: 19) highlighted the faculty of cinema to offer



visual models which would instruct spectators on how to interact in a way that respects the leading institutional and cultural conventions.

The alleged influence of cinema in the daily life of the Western world justifies the relevance of the contemplation of the gender-related interaction and behavioural models incarnated by reputed actors and actresses. Performers do integrate the visible heads of the ideological representations carefully calculated and inserted into filmic texts, and models for spectators to follow in pursuit of a life of luxury outside the wide screen.

According to Desombre (2015), “It’s impossible to escape celebrity culture and the images and details of everything celebrities do, from grocery shopping to partying”. Such a dynamic is illustrated by Hoffman & Tan (2015), who correlate the increase of colorectal cancer screenings, in over 20%, in the month following the broadcasting of Katie Couric’s colonoscopy in *NBC* (*NBC News*, 2018) Today show.

2

The global broadcasting of reactionary masculinities in contemporary media

The apex of such recognised models would be found in Hollywood’s Hall of Fame, the most powerful and productive filmic industry in the globe. To these regards, the study of Will Smith’s broadcasted masculinity could be especially fruitful, provided Smith’s protagonist role in thirty-eight triple-A films and his production of twenty-one movies, which would give an approximate idea of his massive influence, and the violent ways the movie star exhibited, on the cinema consumers’ values, beliefs, perception of the world and conduct. Hence, it may well be considered that any spectator who witnessed Smith’s physical assault on Chris Rock at the 2022 Oscars, could possibly be inspired by the intolerable actions of the former and feel invited to replicate Smith’s behaviour in their daily lives.

The power of the cinema industry, within entertainment major and most acknowledged sectors, in the vectorisation of prepared and highly controlled supremachist ideological principles may well be deemed as undeniable, provided its faculty to elicit viewers’ complicity and empathy with both characters and the focalised circumstances they present. As defended by Hanich (2018), “in a different but equally effective way, acting on or with something absent can elicit the com-



plicity of the audience". Thus, the potential of the cinema to tacitly seek for the empathy and support of the spectators, who accept to involve in the filmic text upon the satisfaction of their desire to watch a given movie, is studied as an existing phenomenon not to disdain.

Indeed, reputed actors and actresses may be observed to become incarnation of the messages encoded in the values their characters are designed to represent, using their influence as platform for the permeabilisation of the desired ideological precepts. As reported by Boyle (2010), the political propaganda implemented by actor Arnold Schwarzenegger to attain his election as the Governor of California in 2003 was ultimately fostered by the ideological precepts encoded in his characters. Therefore, the film narrations where the actor who incarnated Terminator at the cinema theatre participated from the decade of 1970s would have shaped Schwarzenegger's public image as politician in "real" life.

As readers may be aware, Hollywood movie stars move masses and modulate fans' feelings, emotions and perceptions of reality of those who attempt to identify themselves with the glorious existences they exhibit both inside and outside the narrative frame.

As confirmed by Desombre (2015), clear illustrations of the inspirational potential of celebrities may be found in the live broadcasting of Katie Couric's colonoscopy in *NBC Today* (NBC News, 2018), which redounded into an up following growth of colorectal cancer screenings in twenty out of one hundred cases.

Upon his reaction, Will Smith unfortunately casted shadows on the World cinema yearly event and unfairly displaced the fruits of months of work of thousands of professionals and millions of dollars in investments in favour of a lamentable spectacle.

Smith's privileged position within the industry, who has been the producer of twenty-one movies and the protagonist of thirty-eight productions and standing as a visible head within the cinema industry and, by extension, in the overall current leisure time panorama, would catalyse ideological conveyance by questionable means.

In the specific context of the Oscars' 2022 gala, the outburst of fury exhibited by Will Smith, upon the verbal offence of his life companion, Jada Pinkett, who has publicly recognised to suffer from alopecia, as previously discussed, would be incredibly amplified by both live broadcasting and video repositories with global outreach.

Hence, all the spectators, as inspired by the model of toxic masculinity offered by Smith, could become a living vector of the ideological



precepts which defend the female passivity in favour of the actions of the male figure of reference, who would feel providentially compelled to retrieve the family honour passively stained by the weak female target.

As reflected on by Vandello & Cohen (2003), the socio-political dynamics generated around honour hold certain connections with some typologies of abuse, which would include, among its multiple formats, domestic violence.

Final reflection

In the book you are close to finish reading, which I would like to reiterate my thankfulness for and my hope that you enjoyed these lines as much as I amused myself writing, I studied the deployment of traditional and contemporary narrative formats.

Regarded in the specific context of patriarchal establishments which have governed the Western world since early foundational civilisations, the endurance of the supremacist organisation principles is observed to depend on the creation and maintenance of a conceptually recreated gender breach.

As explained throughout the chapters of this monograph, the potential encoding of gender unequal ideological concerns, as oriented to the alterity portrayal of the male and the female with socio-political stratification purposes, is present in a wide variety of narrative formats.

In first term, the penetrating television advertising male chauvinist ideological symbolism has been studied in influential companies in the Spanish twenty-first century food and hygiene products industries. These major sectors of daily consumption goods industry are especially relevant, as for the gender conceptualisation they encode, due to the trust deposited by the clients who purchase their products among a vast market.

To these regards, advertisements on super sales Nestlé and its representative custard product “Natillas La Lechera” is deeply integrated in the Spanish houses, as one of the oldest dessert products in the supermarket. Likewise, reputed trademark La Cocinera (“the female cook”) defends in its motto “I like to eat at home” and issued an interesting “jealous grandmothers” TV-spot saga.

On the contrary, spots promoting hygiene “Lejía conejo” bleach product, “Vileda Windomatic” squeegee and “Philips Perfect Care” ironing station reveal stereotypical representations of the male and the female in the fulfilment or dissatisfaction of the gender-specific patriarchal task assignment.



While TV-spots and animation may be initially considered to befit the same audiovisual formats, the graphic representation, the correspondence between outer and inner narrative frameworks, the duration and narrative concentration are significantly divergent, which requires a rather extensive and unifocal approach in the case of the latter.

In the particular case of animation, which does not intend to recreate the narratee's real life, as opposed to television advertising, characters, along with the encodings inserted in their design and practical operativity, are studied to have a powerful faculty to channelise narrative-controlled feelings and ideas. The successful conveyance of the ideological values they represent expected to respond, proportionally, to their embracement by the audience.

Specifically, *The Simpsons*, which stands as the longest scripted show in TV history, has been recognised with multiple major awards and acknowledged as the most famous family, even beyond UK royal family's popularity. This unrivalled TV series embodies, indeed, a representative instance of an influential animation series with potential gender-breach enhancement effects through ideological vectorisation.

In particular, "The Diatribe of a Mad Housewife" chapter dramatises the incorporation of the female into the public sphere to contribute to society through professionalism. Female writing, as a potential source of subversive denunciation of women's disadvantaged circumstances, is presented as a source of male conceit and parasitism on male creations.

Contemporary written formats have also been explored to complement the holistic contribution performed by narratives for the creation of a multiplatform supremachist ideological apparatus, as a sort of panoply.

To these regards, high impact viral accounts reveal as a powerful source of gender-inequality ideologisation. Its adaptative contextual flexibility, the sense of veracity it recreates and its cautionary ending exhort narratees to vectorise the subliminally ideological precepts encoded in the story "DNA".

These atemporal narratives, which transcend the traditional barriers of space and time through the customisation of a verisimilar story to the receivers' reality, are originally borrowed from reputed urban legend anthologies in Spanish and English language collated by Ortí and Sampere (2017), Camacho (2005, 2007), Brown & Flynn (2003) and Brunvald (1999).



In these stories, the female protagonists' range of action is unrestrained by the traditional male custodian figure, which permit to observe the patriarchally recreated disasters associated to women's activity in public spaces.

Relevant urban legends to study in detail include Brown and Flynn's (1999) "Chain Reaction" and Camacho's (2008) "Secado Rápido". The account of Pope(ss) Joan's life by Hayes (2013) has been studied with the purpose of reviewing the legitimisation of the validity of traditional male-exclusive organisation units in the public sphere, such as male ordination, which comply with the patriarchal task distribution and the gender-based spherification of the Western contemporary world.

Another written format assumed by narrations which purport to be based on factual information would be news. As explained, these informative texts are basically constructed by means of an intensive process of elaboration, shaping and rectification. The constant polishing of the text towards the final informative product offers a room for the homogeneous interspersing of fact-based information, the writers' own opinions and conceptions, and the desired ideological precepts that respond to the communicators' ideological intentions.

The pertinence of news for the discovery of gender-related stereotypical concerns is explained by the widely acknowledged impact of informative texts in the shaping of individuals' reality interpretation. The informative context created around Will Smith's aggression to Chris Rock at the 2022 Academy Awards is of special significance for the discovery of indoctrinating encodings in the construction of news.

The informative accounts discussed include "Smith makes Oscar History after Slapping Christ Rock over joke about wife" (SeisDedos and González, 2022), and "Will Smith wanted to "protect and restore respect" for Jada but it wasn't channelled in the right way" (Young and Hass, 2022). Other illustrative pieces of news are Spanish "Todos estamos hartos, no sólo Will Smith" (Roig, 2022) and Portuguese "Will Smith na Noite do Oscar, e a Legítima Defesa da Honra de Terceiro" (Hafemann, 2022).

The models of toxic masculinities dangerously promoted by an influential figure of the Hollywood starry sky, such as renowned actor and producer Will Smith, are also discovered to be subject to massive outreach broadcasting, which sort of reedited version of the modalities of gender-specific interaction entailed by the medieval honour approach to conflict resolution.



Despite the overall attention paid to the existence of a gender inequality, as a structural phenomenon in Western patriarchies, there is still little awareness of the representative potential of the great diversity of narrative formats which bombard the population with reactionary ideals.

To these regards, the functionality of the denunciation of representational alterity shall never be dismissed. In the fight against gender inequality, the unveiling of supremachist fictions is only the first step for the progression of humanity towards sincerely democratising models of society.



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Essentially, democratic citizenship must pose itself a crucial question: Are current Western societies' concessions to feminism genuine or a cover by supremachism to survive in an ideologically volatile world?

Sergio Yagüe-Pasamón is a gender, narrative and linguistic discourse researcher. In his scientific production, which awarded the author a PhD degree at University of Córdoba (Spain), the researcher explores the manipulative modernisation of the female conception as a derivative and secondary figure. His background as Associate Teacher at NTNU (Norway) permitted the author to survey the socio-linguistic impact of the phenomenon.