

BETWEEN THE NORM AND THE EXCEPTION: GENDER ASYMMETRIES IN PORTUGUESE NEWSMAGAZINES

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ABSTRACT

This paper, which is informed by a feminist perspective, presents an analysis of the gender representations that emerge in the Portuguese *newsmagazines*, focusing in particular on their intersection with the thematic profile of this type of medium. The results suggest that these publications tend to favour representational paradigms that are consistent with the 'benevolent sexism'. While men are represented as holders of power and agents of influence, women are portrayed as individuals that depend on the mentoring of their male counterparts in the exercise of leadership. The Portuguese *newsmagazines* thus invisibilise the diversity of identities and experiences, encouraging the perpetuation of androcentric values and unequal power relations.

KEYWORDS

Newsmagazines; gender representations; Feminist Media Studies

INTRODUCTION

Within the scope of Feminist Media Studies, gender representations have been a major object of criticism (Ross, 2010; Silveirinha, 2004a), together with the analysis of meaning appropriation by the audiences and of the role of media professionals in perpetuating social asymmetries (Mendes & Carter, 2008: 1701).

Unlike other news media, such as the press (Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1997; Cerqueira, 2012) and television (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Lobo & Cabecinhas, 2010), *newsmagazines* have attracted a marginal attention of the feminist academics, as far as the analysis of representational paradigms is concerned. This becomes especially problematic when one considers the role played by this medium in contemporary societies.

Indeed, *newsmagazines* are important agents in the formation of public opinion (Neuman *et al.*, 1992: 78), as they provide a better historical-political setting of the events that mark the global agenda (Cardoso, 2009b: 4342). Although they are characterised by a significant thematic scope, Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to address the so-called 'hard issues' (Cardoso, 2009a: 196), playing a crucial role in the configuration of the public space (Cardoso, 2009b: 4332). Additionally, by mediating 'who' gains relevance, 'how' it is publicly expressed, and 'what' is accepted, naturalised or challenged, this type of medium contributes to building places of public expression and immaterial exchange.

In line with the feminist commitment to the encouragement of social change (Mendes & Carter, 2008: 1701), the present article aims precisely to draw and analyse the gender representations that emerge in the Portuguese *newsmagazines*, focusing in particular on their intersection with the thematic profile of this type of medium. From a

methodological perspective, this study favours the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), since this method enables an exploration of the patterns existing in different types of data.

In conducting this study, we build on the epistemological and theoretical-methodological assumptions developed from the 1980s, which, under the influence of Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, introduced significant changes to the concepts of reality, meaning and gender, thus marking contemporary feminist research (Gill, 2007: 13). These conceptual approaches reject the assumption of a pre-existing reality that the media would merely convey. By going beyond the demand for more realistic images for women – which are underlined by the promotion of a prototype of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ – they think the media as agents participating in the construction of social reality.

Furthermore, as they benefit from the contributions of theorists like Stuart Hall (1980), these perspectives consider that, although media products are framed by hegemonic ideologies, they are polysemic and bear multiple meanings, whose interpretations are influenced by the dynamics existing between institutional production and reception practices (Van Zoonen, 1994: 42).

As they admittedly dissent from the biological essentialism, these feminist readings object also to the static and immutable character assigned to gender in previous research, which established ineradicable boundaries between the categories of male / female, woman / man, heterosexual / homosexual, etc. Conversely, they conceptualise gender as an ambiguous, fluid and dynamic property, whose (re)construction depends on the historical, socio-cultural, political and economic contexts, among others. ‘Gender is an intrinsic part of culture – loosely defined as the production of meaning – and is subject to continuous discursive struggles and negotiation’ (Van Zoonen 1994: 34). In addition to other agents of socialisation, such as family, school, church and the state (Kimmel, 2000: 290), the (news) media are places where gender and their meanings are constructed, negotiated and contested (Van Zoonen 1994: 43).

To conclude, the achievement of the objectives of this study will enable us to identify and understand the role of *newsmagazines* in the (re)production of social inequalities, domination and oppression, as well as to discuss gender as a structuring element of social relations and contribute to the consolidation of Feminist Media Studies in the Portuguese context, where this scientific field is still at an early stage.

NEWSMAGAZINES, GENDER AND NEWS PRODUCTION

Like other large-scale information dissemination tools (Gallagher 2001; Ross 2010), *newsmagazines* are spaces where the (re)negotiation about gender takes place (Cerqueira *et al*, 2014.). Transversely, this permeates and is part of the news production processes through relationships, interests and (inter)dependencies that take place in the media industries (van Zoonen 1994: 65). By influencing the coding of meanings in media discourses, gender assumptions manifest themselves particularly in the formulation of the (qualitative) representation paradigms of individuals.

Although journalists can make individual choices that have the potential to promote new gender representations and break stereotypical conventions (Gallagher, 2001: 172), their degree of autonomy to select and frame the events is limited by constraints inherent to the organisation of the media company (Harrison, 2006: 100). As they are subjected to a professional socialisation process, whereby they learn, acquire and acknowledge the values of the profession, applicable editorial policies and organisational routines (Van Zoonen, 1998; Harrison, 2006), journalists adopt the rules of the company for which they work (Harrison, 2006: 118), reasserting the postulates of the dominant culture (Gill, 2007: 126). Journalists can express their social concerns, as long as these match the interests of the media companies and are consistent with the (androcentric) values that define the journalistic culture (Gallego, 2009: 52).

The intermingling of (traditional) gender ideology in news production processes, which tends to reverberate in essentialist and discriminatory representations, does not result simply from the idiosyncrasies of a particular media group. Rather, it represents a 'global phenomenon' (Ross, 2010: 118), whose dimensions tend to escalate as the result of the concentration of media ownership, which maximizes the homogenisation of information, limiting the expression of alternative discourses. Given that the audiences do not have access to media production arenas, the media groups have ideological and economic advantages; they are more likely to be accepted and supported as 'mirrors of reality' (Carter & Steiner, 2004: 20), which shape essentialist gender representations.

In short, it is important to conduct a process of change in the media industry as a whole (Ross, 2010: 120), including at its micro, meso and macro level, by raising the awareness to gender issues (Gallego, 2009), promoting feminist perspectives (Ross, 2010) and investing in intersectional approaches (Dines & Humez, 1995).

METHODOLOGY

The corpus of this study consists of 104 issues of the most widely read *newsmagazines* published in Portugal (APCT, 2012) in 2011: *Sábado* (issues 348 to 400) and *Visão* (issues 930 to 982). The total set of covers and cover stories of these publications was selected, and the corresponding verbal and visual elements were subsequently collected. Furthermore, the collection included the news pieces that were relevant from the perspective of gender representations. A total of 440 pieces were included in the final sample: 253 from *Sábado* and 187 from *Visão*.

Upon collection, the material was (re)organised and categorised using NVivo 8.0. Methodologically, a thematic analysis was elected (Braun & Clarke, 2006), since this enables the 'identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (themes) across the data', and enhances the understanding of the explicit and implicit meanings associated with the textual data (Guest *et al.*, 2012).

Thus, by resorting to the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the corpus reading was initiated by drawing the thematic profile of the magazines *Sábado* and *Visão*, in order to determine the frequency, inclusions, exclusions and their respective meanings.

Subsequently, an analysis was conducted of gender representation paradigms emerging from and intersecting with the thematic sections of these *newsmagazines*.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The profile of the Portuguese *newsmagazines* investigated in this study – *Sábado* and *Visão* – is outlined and organised into ten major themes¹, namely: Economics; Politics; Sexuality and intimacy; Crime and Justice; Health, Leisure and Well-being; Social trends; Arts and show business; Family; Society; and History and Ephemeris (see Cerqueira, Magalhães & Cabecinhas, 2014). This thematic scope and variety are observable by analysing the covers, whose headlines and cover stories encompass very diverse topics. Like Cardoso (2012a), multi-theme and multi-image covers were preferred.

In the corpus overall, Economics and Politics emerge as the more prominent themes, accounting for 35.7 per cent of the material analysed. In both publications, the pieces included in these theme categories relate to the monitoring of national and international issues, particularly the European economic crisis and the 2011 presidential and legislative elections in Portugal. Conversely, the themes Society and History and Ephemeris are those that attract less attention, accounting only for 8.4 per cent of the corpus as a whole.

Due to space and time constraints, in this article the analysis of the representational paradigms and its intersection with the thematic profile of the Portuguese *newsmagazines* includes only the themes that individually account for at least 10 per cent of the corpus, namely: Economics (18.5%); Politics (17.2%); Crime and Justice (12.5%); Health, Leisure and Well-being (10.6%).²

The analysis conducted revealed the (crosscut) existence of three gender representation paradigms that, albeit their occasional ambiguity and fluidity, tend to be supported by dichotomous conceptualisations about femininity(ies) and masculinity(ies). The main results of the thematic analysis are presented next.

MEN AS NORM, WOMEN AS EXCEPTION

Despite the socio-cultural, economic and political changes observed in Portugal over the last decades, these *newsmagazines* continue to promote different and, sometimes, antagonist representations of men and women with regard to participation in the public space; while the former are considered as the ‘norm’, the latter are referred to as the ‘exception’.

As they are understood as the ‘natural’ actors of the public space, men appear to be represented predominantly in areas such as politics and government, economics

¹ Since there are news pieces that did not meet the criteria of any of these 10 themes, they were included under the heading ‘Other themes’, which corresponds to the miscellaneous category identified by Braun and Clarke (2006). In most cases, the categorisation of a particular news piece under ‘Other themes’ was provisional; these news pieces were included in one of the main themes at a later stage of the analysis, and after the definition and distribution of themes was streamlined. Other news pieces, which met the criteria of different categories, were included simultaneously in two or more themes.

² The section ‘Sexuality and intimacy’, which accounts for 13.9% of the corpus, was not included in the analysis. This category will be discussed in an individual article, taking into account its core relevance to Feminist Media Studies.

and finance, diplomacy, business world, sports and social movements, among others. Further to previous studies (e.g. Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1997; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003), they are characterised by personality traits that are traditionally relevant in the professional and political context (e.g. demand, seriousness, critical thinking, etc.). Generally, men's intervention in the public space, held by individual actions and / or in combination with similar actions, is included in the following categorisations:

- Holders of power and influence:

As they fill decision-making roles, men are the key players in the construction of the historical past of their country. Notably, for example, the news piece 'As dinastias mais poderosas' ('The most powerful dynasties', issue 393, *Sábado*) describes the most influential families in Greece, led only by men, who represent the political elite. Visually, this premise is evident: the image that accompanies the news piece displays three male figures presented in a genealogical hierarchy, who are of noble descent; they belong to the country elite and have access to the exercise of power.

In addition to their participation in the construction of national history, men tend to be depicted as the main actors in this organisation of the present and in shaping the future of the social, economic and political domains. In this respect, the piece 'A geografia do poder' ('The geography of power'), published in issue 959 of *Visão*, when addressing the creation of the new Portuguese government, only represents men, textually and visually, among 'the four in command'. Although the news piece makes reference to the President of the Portuguese Parliament, Assunção Esteves, as the first woman to hold 'the most important position in the nation', no visual reference is made to her.

There are also other news pieces that explicitly represent men as influential figures in a number of areas. This is the case of Miguel Relvas, former deputy minister and minister of Parliamentary Affairs of the Portuguese Government, who, in the news piece 'O bem-amado' ('The Beloved', issue 965, *Visão*), is described as having close ties with powerful groups in Brazil, such as politicians, businessmen, media professionals and society, among others. The image that opens the piece is also relevant in this respect: Miguel Relvas is portrayed on the phone in Parliament, which is a reference to the diverse and important contacts that he has established with interest groups. This reinforces the idea that he knows how to 'make his way' and successfully achieve his aims.

- Actors in the sociopolitical change:

Across social movements, in contexts of upheaval and political protests, the main players tend to be (young) male seeking to promote the democratic principles.

The pieces 'Os 'amigos' da revolução' ('The 'friends' of the revolution', issue 936, *Visão*) and 'A revolta dos jovens' ('The youth uprising', issue 353, *Sábado*) place the men precisely at the centre of the socio-political change in Egypt, characterising them for their courage, capacity for social mobilisation and political resistance. They are the main characters of 'a revolution that is originating a 'democratic wave''. Visually, they are represented in public contexts, participating in demonstrations, within a frame that reveals

their determination. Despite the body injuries, the police repression, the constant threats and numerous other adversities, they appear to be faithful to their struggle.

At the same time, these pieces characterise the participation of women as unexpected and of little significance, associating them with the traditional gender roles. Expressions like *'Waiting: women often play a central role in the protests'* demonstrate precisely this: women are not normally taken to be actors in contexts of revolution, being more prone to play more passive / pacific roles, support the main characters – men – as mothers, wives and daughters, and await further developments. When they actively participate in this type of contexts, their participation is seen as novel or surprising, since they are not supposed to take on such roles.

- Prodigality, corruption and misuse of power:

Often, men holding political positions are portrayed as being responsible for the financial crisis in Portugal. This is the case of the piece *'As despesas imparáveis de Alberto João'* (*'The unstoppable expenditure of Alberto João'*), published in issue 386 of *Sábado*, in which the President of the Autonomous Region of Madeira is portrayed as an over spender, whose work led to the *'budget hole'*.

In another piece, entitled *'O perfeito ator'* (*'The perfect actor'*, issue 970, *Visão*), Isaltino Morais, then mayor of Oeiras, is suspected of being involved in crimes of tax fraud and money laundering. However, he is framed by an apologetic approach: *'mysterious character born at home', 'hero of a Camilo novel ... left the province, walked the corridors of power'*. Although he has taken advantage of his political position to the benefit of his personal interests, Isaltino Morais is not portrayed as a criminal – in the most common sense – but as a well-related, influential individual, who makes a skilful use of his abilities to achieve his goals.

More radically, the misuse of power is described as being eminently perpetrated by men, as is shown in the piece *'A família violenta do coronel Kadhafi'* (*'Colonel Gaddafi's violent family'*, issue 356, *Sábado*). By resorting to the use of violence and the inculcation of fear, the Libyan head of state's relatives are described as key players in the national public sphere through the positions that they hold and the actions that they undertake; they control the military, companies and technology, among others.

As the main characters of the public sphere, men are represented as the centre around which everything else revolves, including women. The latter are predominantly portrayed as mothers, wives and daughters. That is, they are not the subjects of media coverage due to their individual and autonomous condition, but as a result of their family relationship. As Cerqueira (2012: 422) highlighted, they are represented as *'women-complement'* or *'women-shadow'* because, although they gain visibility in the news media, they are portrayed as a company to someone else's public intervention.

A paradigmatic example of this type of representation is the piece *'Esta é a nova apoiante de Passos Coelho'* (*'Meet the new supporter of Passos Coelho'*), published in issue 365 of *Sábado*. In this news piece, Laura Ferreira is portrayed as an important pillar in the life of the Portuguese Prime Minister; although she does not feel comfortable

about her public exposure, *'she says that it is important to support her husband'*. Peered into her privacy, she is considered *'an electoral asset for PSD'* as she will give *'a more human face to the leader [Pedro Passos Coelho]'*.

See, also, the piece *'A cigarra e a formiga'* ('The Ant and the Grasshopper'), published in issue 931 of *Visão*. As it traces the socio-biographical profile of Manuel Alegre and Cavaco Silva, the candidates running for the 2011 Portuguese Presidential election, the news piece cites only one woman, in her role as a wife, who is described in the exercise of her domestic tasks and in meeting her spouse's wishes (e.g. *'Aníbal prefers small fried sardines and tomato rice, prepared by his wife, Maria Alves da Silva'*). Media representations like the ones described confirm Gallego's (2009: 45) assertions: 'They [women] are the objects observed, which is not part of the centre from which one observes and narrates. Hence, women are presented for what they are, and not for what they do.' Conversely, 'men are the verb, and the verb is action'; they are the subjects that act and star in the events upon which everything else is narrated.

As far as the role of women in the public sphere is concerned – as heads of state, members of the Cabinet, members of Parliament, entrepreneurs, etc. – the Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to assert hegemonic discourses that have already been identified in other types of news media, such as the press (Ross, 2004: 74) or television (Gidengil & Everitt, 2003). These media represent them according to the following types of approaches:

- Unpreparedness and need for political mentoring:

Overall, women are represented as a novelty in the areas of public importance, being commonly associated with traits such as incompetence, lack of clearly defined interests and absence of independent (political) beliefs. They emerge as individuals whose performance in the public / political arena owes to, and depends on their male counterparts.

The news piece *'Agora é que são elas'* ('Now it is for real'/'Now it is their turn', issue 957, *Visão*) is particularly illustrative of this point. Women appear as inexperienced individuals in an unfamiliar territory, 'naturally' dominated by men: politics. Women's participation is framed as a threat to the fundamental structures of this field (clearly taken to be male), as is evidenced by the title of the news piece ('Now it is for real'/'Now it is their turn'). Additionally, expressions such as *'It is clear that women are next in line. But maybe they are still immature for the job'* challenge the political suitability of this group, while legitimising the existence of hierarchical relations (men as mentors, women as mentored). Therefore, unlike their male counterparts, who are (a priori) considered to be suitable for the exercise of their political / public roles, women are placed under journalistic scrutiny, and have to undertake a double effort to legitimise their status.

Likewise, the piece *'As rebeldias da protegida de Portas'* ('The unruliness of Portas' protégé', issue 372, *Sábado*) portrays the Portuguese Minister for Agriculture and Sea, Assunção Cristas, as lacking the necessary training to hold the position that she was allocated. In particular, it highlights her ignorance of the rules of the Parliament, by resorting to the use of ironic and playful expressions (e.g. *'She ignored the rules and started drinking milk in Parliament, unaware that eating and drinking are not permitted'*). Further to

the 'protective paternalism' (Glick & Fiske, 1996: 493), Paulo Portas, president of CDS-PP, emerges as the figure that determines the Minister's career, provides protection and guides her political orientation. In addition to the text, visual elements too reinforce this idea: the image in the piece shows Assunção Cristas laying her head on Paulo Portas's shoulder, who in turn caresses her, in an allusion to a father-daughter relationship.

- Exceptionality:

Notably, the Portuguese *newsmagazines* encompass a second type of representational paradigm: women as exceptional individuals, who were able to succeed in a male-dominated domain (politics). An example of this is the news piece 'Rottweiler à espreita' ('Rottweiler lurking', issue 348, *Sábado*), in which the Socialist MEP Ana Gomes is described as being determined and committed to her political ideals. In another piece, 'Dilma. A superpresidente' ('Rousseff: The superpresident', issue 973, *Visão*), Brazil's President, Dilma Rousseff, is represented as someone who, '*without changing her serious and unfatherly style*', takes an aggressive stance against corruption in her country.

In both instances, the model of woman-exception (Cerqueira, 2012: 422) is structured at odds with the traits attributed to the normative femininity. In the pieces studied, the female news subjects are not described as having attributes that underlie the female stereotype, such as the absence of qualities oriented towards work and individual autonomy (Amâncio, 1994: 64). Rather, they are mostly characterised from aspects associated with the male stereotype, such as professional skills, the exercise of control over others and control over the situations (Amâncio, 1994: 68).

However, exceptionality is not accorded to women solely in the political domain, but also in the business domain. For example, in the piece 'De operária à ribalta' ('From worker to the spotlight', issue 937, *Visão*), Purificación García is portrayed as a woman who, despite being born in a disadvantaged economic environment, was able to rise socially thanks to her own personal merit, thereby making her name a '*benchmark in fashion*'. As it moves the focus of attention away from the social asymmetries that mark the business world (Nogueira, 2009: 105-106) to focus on individual achievements, this piece illustrates precisely the '*essentialist-individualistic discourse*' (Nogueira, 2006: 64), which tends to strengthen unequal power relations and to support the meritocratic rhetoric (Nogueira, 2006: 70).

In Portuguese *newsmagazines*, the representations of women holding political positions commonly include a reference to aspects of their private lives, such as the experience of conjugality / marriage, the exercise of motherhood, reconciling work and family life, etc. Conversely, rarely are such references made in the media representations of men; when they are, they serve to highlight the multifaceted nature of their actions and to enhance their ability to reconcile multiple domains simultaneously. For example, the piece 'Pedro, passos para conhecê-lo' ('Pedro, steps to get to know him', issue 953, *Visão*) contains a specific reference to the performance of the Portuguese Prime Minister in the private domain, particularly in providing care to his family: '*...he spends several nights playing his role of dedicated father. (...) to be home in time to bathe his daughter and take her to*

school.' Since, according to gender ideology, a man is not supposed to undertake these tasks, the emphasis on this aspect associates the actions of the Prime Minister with concepts of dedication and care. For women, references to private life tend to reinforce their inability to perform political / public tasks, and to legitimise their restriction to traditional gender roles. For men, such references encompass an empowering character.

In short, gender representations in Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to reassert the public space as a male-dominated field, where the participation of women is considered to be merely episodic and even dispensable. Additionally, based on a reassuring perspective, these representations favour the idea that gender equality will be naturally achieved, notably by increasing the number of women in key positions. The maintenance of such representational paradigms – especially those that shape women holding political positions – has negative implications at different levels, e.g. by raising obstacles to women's participation in public space and to the exercise of their civil and political rights (Ross & Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997: 106), posing a threat to the efficient organisation and maintenance of the democratic system (Adcock, 2010: 151; Ross, 2004: 68), and perpetuating social asymmetries (Gallego, 2009: 45).

WOMEN AS BODY AND PHYSICALITY

Like other types of media (Gallagher, 2001: 81; Ross, 2010: 100; Gidengil & Everitt, 2003: 560), *newsmagazines* tend to background what women 'think' and 'say' and to give special importance to aspects related to their looks, clothing, sense of fashion, etc. This is reflected in the news piece 'Michelle e Maria' ('Michelle and Maria', issue 355, *Sábado*): as they are described informally, called by their first name, Michelle Obama and Maria Cavaco Silva are the subject of a comparative analysis that includes the type of clothing worn in different contexts, such as official / State ceremonies, in everyday life, on holidays, when exercising, etc.

However, it is important to note that the emphasis on *physicality* applies to women as a social group, regardless of their scope of action. For example, in support of Ross and Sreberny-Mohammadi's (1997: 107) claims, women holding political positions are subject to objectification / sexualisation processes promoted by the media in the same extent with the same frequency as other women. From language used to the photographic contents, the media resort to different strategies to highlight the hegemonic femininity. News pieces like 'Agora é que são elas' ('Now it is for real'/'Now it is their turn', issue 957, *Visão*) and 'As rebeldias da protegida de Portas' ('The unruliness of Portas' protégé', issue 372, *Sábado*) point precisely in this direction: the main characters, i.e. women with political responsibilities in Portugal, are portrayed as bodies, accessories and props.

In the Portuguese news magazines, women tend to be portrayed as individuals obsessed with the body and physical appearance, to whom the mismatch with the ideal of beauty raises feelings of frustration, worry and self-rejection. It is precisely this idea that underlies the story 'Uma semana sem espelhos' ('A week without mirrors'), published in issue 378 of *Sábado*. The mirror is depicted as an ambiguous object for women, who are considered in the article as a single and homogeneous group: on the one hand, it is

referred to as an accessory that most women cannot do without; on the other hand, it is described as a source of unpleasant emotions (e.g. ‘...*what makes us more distressed is that which we see on the other side*’). In the news piece, the latter dimension tends to worsen with age: ‘...*as women grow older, they like less and less what they see in the mirror. They detect excessive fat, wrinkles and white hair.*’ Ageing in women is, thus, represented as a process of physical deterioration, as a beauty suppressor and as a reason for regret.

However, as sustained by Baudrillard (1970/2010) and Wolf (1992), matching the beauty standards is a must for women only, and does not apply on equal terms to men. It is precisely this premise that underlies the news piece ‘Vaidade masculina’ (‘Male vanity’, issue 939, *Visão*). Despite the increasing resort of men to beauty services, the framework suggests the unexpected, surprising and even superfluous nature of those types of behaviour. For women, body care is the norm; for men, it is depicted as a mere expression of ‘*vanity*’.

According to Wolf (1992: 306), the media tend to convey images in which the women’s body and face are represented in a dissected / fragmented form. Similarly, Ross (2010: 119) considers that the media and their linguistic constructs objectify women, always making them worth less than the sum of their body parts. For example, in the news piece ‘A mulher perfeita’ (‘The perfect woman’, issue 357, *Sábado*), precisely, body parts of different celebrities – e.g. nose, chin, lips, eyes, etc. – are cut and another person is created, which, in the light of cosmetic surgery, matches the beauty epitome in the Western context: hour-glass-shaped body, slim and young; blond hair; fair, ‘*flawless*’, white skin; big eyes, etc.

In a culture where the women’s bodies are subject to continuous ‘*monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodelling*’ (Gill, 2007: 149), the resort to diets is embodied in a practice often attributed to this group. In this respect, the article ‘As nossas bisavós já faziam dieta’ (‘Our great-grandmothers were already on a diet’, issue 362, *Sábado*), despite making reference to cases of men, portrays women as the main supporters of dietary practices. Also, unlike men — whose decision to ‘*go on a diet*’ is seen as a manifesto of concerns related to health care — women are depicted as being driven by purposes related to aesthetics and the body cult.

In short, the Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to frame women building upon their physical attributes, representing them as individuals to whom matching the normative beauty standards gains an utmost importance. This appreciation of *physicality*, aesthetics and body cult in the media coverage of women converges precisely with the dimensions of the female stereotype (Amâncio, 1994: 64). Based on a differentiated evaluative connotation, where the male dominates and the female is portrayed in a subordinate position (Amâncio 1994: 68), this approach contributes to discrediting the opinions, experiences and professional performances of women, limiting their potential and achievements in the socio-economic, cultural and political arenas.

MEN AS OFFENDERS, WOMEN AS VICTIMS

Notably, the Portuguese *newsmagazines* represent men as the main involved in crimes against people (e.g. crimes against life, physical integrity, personal freedom, and

sexual self-determination and freedom), crimes against property (e.g. fraud), crimes against the State (e.g. money laundering and tax fraud) and crimes against life in society (e.g. terrorism).

In the material studied, crimes against people gain a greater prominence: their representation indicates the exercise of physical power and exacerbation of emotions, thus supporting research previously conducted in the field of crime, gender and the media (Simões, 2011: 460). In this respect, the news piece 'Esfaqueou a mulher e aparafusou a porta' ('He stabbed his wife and bolted the door', issue 354, *Sábado*) stands out. This article presents a detailed description of the murder of a woman by her husband, who had been a victim of domestic violence for several years. The thematic treatment in this news piece is given some sensationalist traits, which reflect both at the textual level (e.g. '*...chased after her and stabbed her nine times – then let her to die, trapped in the laundry room*'), and at the visual level, through an illustration representing the offender just after he committed the crime, holding a knife, in a setting filled with blood. In the pieces 'Como ele os matou um a um' ('How he killed them one by one', issue 378, *Sábado*) and 'Anders, o génio do mal' ('Anders, the evil genius', issue 960, *Visão*), the representational paradigms emphasise the iniquity of the aggressor. In both publications, he is characterised based on personality traits associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as coldness and judicious calculation, whose actions — carefully orchestrated — are imbued with a sadistic character and are instigator of '*terror*'.

Very marginally, the corpus of analysis includes news pieces that situate the women in the perpetration of crimes against property (e.g. theft) and crimes against the State (e.g. drug trafficking).

As far as the first classification is concerned, the approaches are not very serious, and show some hints of humour and playfulness, as is the case, for example, of the piece 'O temível gangue de mulheres' ('The fearful gang of women'), published in issue 350 of *Sábado*. The ironic and satirical content permeates the news piece in its entirety, starting immediately with the fore title (i.e. '*when they ruled the streets of London*'), and reflecting also in the recurring tendency to *genderise* the crimes perpetrated by the English group in the 1920s (e.g. '*... they used to steal jewellery, fur coats and silk dresses. (...) Next they would spend all the money on new clothes and wild parties*', '*... they would leave their diamond rings marked in the face of the victims*').

As far as the drug trafficking crimes are concerned, news representations encompass an exonerating content in relation to the women convicted, emphasising the socio-economic and cultural causes of their criminal involvement. We should also raise the story 'Mães entre muros' ('Mothers within walls', issue 946, *Visão*), in which women are portrayed as vulnerable subjects, affected by poverty, addiction and mental illness. '*Bad choices*' is the expression used to synthesise the factors that lead '*most women to jail*'. Transversely, women are portrayed as being related to activities traditionally associated with the private arena, such as the provision of care to children, regardless of their status in the prison context: '*Most of the prison officers admit that they cannot resist a child. Let alone a baby.*'

As highlighted by Simões (2011: 124), unlike the universe of offenders and victims of interpersonal violence — which is ‘mostly male’ — the victimisation in the private space and in intimate relationships places women as main characters.

In the corpus of analysis, women are primarily portrayed as victims of crimes against people (e.g. crimes against life, physical integrity, personal freedom and sexual self-determination and freedom). However, the crimes of which they are (alleged) victims are portrayed, in general, unconnected from the ideological assumptions that motivate violence against women.

In this respect, it is worth exploring the news piece ‘Queimada por causa de ciúmes’ (‘Scorched out of jealousy’, issue 376, *Sábado*), which describes the murder of a woman by her husband. This description is accompanied with references to the experience of conjugality, attempts to escape the context of violence, etc. In addition to the inexistence of the investigation of violence as a social problem, the news piece encompasses an axis of exoneration of the offender, as the title suggests by using the noun ‘*jealousy*’. In this context, the story of the surviving victim is also published, especially in the piece ‘A pugilista sobreviveu ao marido’ (‘The boxer survived her husband’), published in issue 359 of *Sábado*. This news piece focuses on a woman that survived her husband’s attempt to murder her, situating it in an approach of exceptionality. She is represented as a super-woman who, after resisting a highly probably death, managed to succeed in the sport that she had once practiced: box. This reference, which is accompanied by a framework that reveals the limited participation of women in this type of sport, stresses the exceptional character of this woman.

As the examples above demonstrate, the more they match the characteristics associated with the normative femininity, the greater the victimiser status of the women: they are considered vulnerable, innocent and defenceless. Those that cross gender norms – in particular in the sexual field – are represented as dangerous, untrustworthy, absent (Meyers, 1997; Wykes, 1998). In the particular case of sexual crimes, these women tend to emerge as the driving force and / or guilty of the crimes of which they were (allegedly) victims (Meyers, 1997: 61-62).

See, for example, the news piece ‘Ruby pode ser o fim de Silvio’ (‘Ruby may be the end of Silvio’, published in issue 352 of *Sábado*. Karima El Marough — the young Moroccan woman with whom the former Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, allegedly had sex when she was a minor — is portrayed as the woman who ‘*can bring down Berlusconi*’. Treated as the main character of a fictional story — which is described as ‘*beautiful, ambitious, wicked, capable of anything to satiate her thirst for money*’ — El Marough is not framed in a scenario of (alleged) sexual exploration of minors. On the one hand, together with other women, she is portrayed as the embodiment of sensuality and seduction, to which Berlusconi cannot resist. Utterances like ‘*They would rub up on him and let themselves be touched*’, which situate women as a phrasal subject, attribute an active role to Marough and the other girls, while the representations of Berlusconi suggest his passiveness and place him as the victim. On the other hand, El Marough emerges as an obstacle to the political achievements of the former Prime Minister, and is assigned partial responsibility for the negative corollaries that may arise for the political reputation of Berlusconi.

In this regard, it is also worth noting the piece ‘A vigarista... ou a santa’ (‘The crook... or the saint’), published in issue 375 of *Sábado*. Nafissatou Diallo, an alleged victim of rape perpetrated by the then director-general of the International Monetary Fund, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, is eminently represented as self-serving, as someone who is able of doing anything to achieve her goals. Although they show the positive side of Diallo, there is a tendency to cast doubts on her, blaming her for making Strauss-Kahn politically vulnerable, at a time when he was preparing to run for French President.

In contrast with the women, to a lower accordance with the traditional traits and gender roles corresponds, conversely, a higher victimisation of men. In this respect, it is worth noting the piece ‘Torturado pelos pais por ser gay’ (‘Tortured by his parents for being gay’, issue 392, *Sábado*), which tells the story of a young North-American that was victim of physical and psychological abuse (e.g. punches and kicks, burns, electric shocks, etc.), mainly of his father, in an attempt to ‘convert him’ into a straight man. This news piece shows that, like gender violence, crimes against people with non-normative sexual orientations are not surveyed, in the news media, as to their ideological bases (heterosexist and homophobic). And in support of Riggs and Patterson (2009), the media invisibility of the diversity of LGBT people and the absence of a discussion about the heteronormativity contribute only to sharpening the prevalence of homophobic violence.

In general, the Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to represent men as offenders and women as (direct and indirect) victims, particularly of crimes perpetrated by the former against the women’s lives, physical integrity, and sexual self-determination and freedom. Despite the increasing media coverage of violence against women – which, since it was initiated in the 1970s, has contributed to a greater social awareness and public recognition of this problem (Ross, 2010: 119; Kitzinger, 2004: 33) –, the news media still minimise the causes and requirements of crimes against women in contemporary societies. In line with research on crime, gender and the media (e.g. Meyers, 1997; Wykes, 1998; Kitzinger, 2004; Simões, 2011), the present analysis shows that Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to make invisible gender violence as a systematic action, which takes place in a specific socio-economic and cultural context, supported by social asymmetries and unequal power relations. They favour, instead, individualised approaches to *male* offensiveness, which — being attributed to biological, psychological and pathological reasons — ‘disqualify the victims and give a new life to the essentialist and stereotypical views of femininity’ (Simões, 2011: 290).

In short, in the media coverage of crime and justice, women and men are represented based on the traditional gender traits and roles. Whereas a higher match with the attributes associated with (normative) femininity will raise the status of women as victims, a higher conformity to the norms of (normative) masculinity will enhance the allocation of the status of offender to men. By reasserting the symbolic asymmetry model (Amâncio, 1994) – according to which men emerge as the universal referent, in individuality ideal, and women are portrayed as a collective ideal, as individuals that are gathered in a common destiny –, this differentiation tends to negatively reflect at the level of prevention of criminal behaviour and in the restoration of justice.

FINAL REMARKS

The media have always been at the centre of the feminist critique (van Zoonen, 1994: 11), since they are active constructors of social reality and disseminators of (traditional) gender ideology. By going beyond the mere informational function, they operate as 'agenda-setters' and 'gatekeepers' of androcentric values, contributing to maintaining male dominance and the consequent marginalisation of the interests of women, as well as of other social groups (Ross, 2004: 68).

In this study, the thematic analysis conducted applied to Portuguese *newsmagazines* enabled us to identify and support three paradigms of gender representations and to relate them to the most prominent thematic sections in these publications (i.e. Economics, Politics, Crime and Justice, and Health, Leisure and Well-being).

Firstly, gender representations in Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to reassert the public space as a (naturally) male-dominated field, where the participation of women is considered to be an 'exception'. In most cases, men are portrayed as holders of power and influence, as actors in the socio-political change, and even situated in contexts of prodigality, corruption and misuse of power. Conversely, women's participation in the public sphere is characterised by two — apparently antagonistic — paradigms that contribute to naturalising their subordinate status in the political arena. They are depicted either as unprepared individuals, lacking independent convictions, whose political performance depends on the mentoring of their male counterparts, or as exceptional figures who, thanks to their individual effort, managed to succeed in universes dominated by men. Unlike their political counterparts, the representations of women often include references to aspects of their private lives (e.g. experience of conjugality / marriage, exercise of motherhood, accommodation of work and family life, etc.), which may hinder their public intervention.

Moreover, the body and the *physicality* of women also build the representations that emerge in the Portuguese *newsmagazines*. In addition to being defined based on their bodily / physical attributes, women are portrayed as individuals to whom matching the traditional beauty standards, associated with normative femininity, gains a central position of their concerns, urging them to adopt in particular dietary practices. Such approaches end in the discredit of the intellectual skills and of the professional performance of women, limiting their potential in socio-economic, cultural and political arenas.

Finally, the Portuguese *newsmagazines* favour representational paradigms that are informed by the assumption of *male* offensiveness and *female* victimisation. Men are often portrayed as offenders and women as victims, particularly of crimes perpetrated by the former against their life, physical integrity, and sexual self-determination and freedom. However, although it has gained an increasing media coverage in the last decades, gender violence tends to be made invisible as a continuing act, supported by gender asymmetries and unequal power relations. Irrespective of the status that they are allocated in the contexts of crime and justice, of victim or offender, women and men are framed in accordance with the traditional gender traits and roles. The intermingling of gender assumptions in the media coverage can hinder the understanding of the circumstances

involving differing classifications of crime, limiting the potential of prevention policies and the restoration of justice, among others.

To conclude, like previous studies (e.g. Gidengil & Everitt, 2003; Ross, 2004; Lobo & Cabecinhas, 2010), this article shows that Portuguese *newsmagazines* tend to support the maintenance of dichotomous structures (e.g. male-female, public space-private space, body-mind, offender-victim, etc.), which favour the essentialisation of personal and collective experiences. As they render invisible the individuals that do not match the white, middle class, heterosexual man, these publications overshadow the diversity of identity belonging, their simultaneousness and intersections.

Therefore, a ‘struggle over the meanings’ that permeate the Portuguese *newsmagazines* is required for the promotion of ‘alternative and counter-hegemonic discourses and voices’ (Silveirinha, 2008). The contestation of paradigms that guarantee the hegemonisation of the (traditional) gender ideology thus calls for the inclusion of feminist and intersectional perspectives within the scope of media organisations, as well the promotion of media literacy. It will thus be possible to plant heterogeneous and polyphonic gender representations, that promote equal power relations social relations. //

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