Men have lower life expectancy than women; they account for 90% of the incarcerated population; they die more often in traffic accidents, from alcohol and drug consumption, and they commit more suicides than women. Since that information has been accessible for a long time, why is it not taken into account when campaigns are created and actions are defined? Violence is not an ‘entity’; it is male.

Confronted with that reality, the author sought to formulate the question orientating towards the following working hypothesis: this ‘common knowledge’ should be forgotten, given that the involvement of men in situations of violence plays an important role in the preservation of political ideation in contemporary societies.

During this study it became clear that men are exposed to a more complex type of death than mere physical death, but just as important, which is relative to their social representation. This insight led to understanding other aspects that could be associated with men’s intense involvement in situations of violence. Could it be that in contemporary culture a purpose is served by keeping men involved with situations of violence? If so, what might that be?
From Tarzan to Homer Simpson
From Tarzan to Homer Simpson

Education and the Male Violence of the West

Sócrates Nolasco

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To my daughters, Flora and Luisa
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INTRODUCTION

Violence plays a prominent role in the media today. Both through public campaigns and through various types of popular mobilization, it has become an ‘entity’ to be examined. Upon analyzing some of the available data from sources like IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), from the Ministry of Health, or from the Judicial System, it is possible to realize that violence is not restricted to a social class, race, or age. Even if quantitatively it is more evident in more disenfranchised social segments, violence cuts across all of them.

Something interesting becomes revealed in those data. Men are always the ones who define the contours and the records of violence. Upon organizing a table by sex, it can be verified that violence has no color, age, or social class, but it has a sex.

Men have lower life expectancy than women; they account for 90% of the incarcerated population; they die more often in traffic accidents, from alcohol and drug consumption, and they commit more suicides than women. If that information has been accessible to everyone for a long time, why might it be that when campaigns are created and actions are defined, it is not taken into account? Violence is not an ‘entity;’ it is male.

Confronted with that reality, I sought to formulate the question that oriented my working hypothesis: After all, if violence has a face, why does that face not show through the campaigns and in their proposed unfolding? Could it be that it does not show because it should be forgotten, given that the involvement of men in situations of violence plays an important role in the preservation of political ideation in contemporary societies?

In order to examine that hypothesis, I started my research by evaluating some transformations that took place in societies of the West, establishing as a connecting thread the manner in which social representation of masculinity has been altered.

Therefore, in the passage from traditional societies to modern societies, I analyze a phenomenon around which it was possible to think through the involvement of men in situations of violence in complex contemporary and Western societies. That phenomenon can be characterized by three variables: a shift in the axis of the social value of hierarchy toward the individual, a decrease in the levels of responsibility of modern and individualistic societies in regulating forms of recognition and social insertion for the subject, and finally, the impact both have on the subjectivization process.

Thus, I see that passage as having generated a process of change in the construction of subjectivity and in the processes of subjectivization of male (and female) individuals, as well as in the elements at the foundation of social representation of masculinity in societies belonging to the modern era. That process continues to be in course in contemporary societies.
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In order to carry out the study of this central idea, I initiate an analysis around four questions. The first has to do with the role of myth in the societies of the modern era and its relationship to social organization patterns. The second refers to the role of the collective in western contemporary societies. The third deals with a fraying of the notion of representation while one of the operating principles of modern culture. The fourth analyzes the articulations between subjectivity, culture, and nature, or also between subjectivity, biology, and what is acquired in those contemporary societies.

Starting from the questions above, I consider that the involvement of men in situations of violence is related to the effort undertaken by the subject to maintain his form of being man within the culture he belongs to. That hypothesis will be examined in the course of the book, having as connecting thread the alterations that the hero figure has suffered through history. In order to investigate, in the bosom of contemporary culture, what sense it makes for men to become increasingly involved in situations of violence, two presuppositions constructed from the work by Girard are employed.

The first of them refers to the reconfiguration of the sacred and of the divine within the scope of (and due to) modern social representation processes and is at the base of an emerging social representation of the male, in which violence loses, irreversibly so, its original association with the sacred.

The second presents the exercise of minorities as a new “sacrificial dynamic” that, nonetheless, is no longer sacred, nor an expression of the collective link with the divine, and where the male appears as a new “emissary victim” (Girard, 1990).

Therefore, the change in the social orientation axis that took place in the course of the transition from traditional societies to those founded on the law, on politics, and on the market led to an alteration in how male social representation was defined. Differently from the Greek hero and from the medieval knight, the attributes of vigor, physical force, and loyalty are no longer an identity reference for the modern hero.

The decreasing responsibility of modern and individualistic cultures for a role in articulating forms of recognition and social insertion for subjects, such as took place in traditional societies, caused a reduction in forms of subject adhesion and cohesion relative to the multiples of the societies the subjects belongs to. As that responsibility shifted toward the individual sphere, moving further and further away from the collective, various discourses originating from social movements gradually became consolidated in contemporary societies that came to play an aggregating role, similar to that of the hierarchies in traditional societies. Those social movements, through their struggle for parity of rights, committed to redefining the different social representations of the subject (gender, race, and sexual orientation) in order to face up to how each of them was treated in traditional societies, with a view to according them recognition and value.

Within that landscape, another phenomenon has been increasingly taking place in different countries of the West: The involvement of men in situations of violence in the everyday life of large cities extrapolates the previous statistics of war and police
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casualties. Wars have been around since the age of the gladiators, being fostered both within the Barracks and with police. The violence required from the gladiator and from the soldier is authorized and socially instituted, in addition to being associated with proof of honor and virility. What makes violence current is a certain design of masculinity and the multiple pressures placed on the subject to make use of them; that brings the gladiator closer to the recruit.

The creation of armies cuts through the history of humanity and signals consent given to men regarding the use of force at the service of violence. That use was more than consent; it was a necessity in demarcating borders and securing the domains of nations. In that context, male honor is restricted to fighting. Since the Greeks, dying with honor has been to die at the gladius, both in the political and the romantic spheres.

In the history of societies, thus, we find violence to be associated with masculinity, violence that is later no longer restricted to wars but permeates the empirical subject’s everyday life and works as a sort of existence indicator. That is what we find, for example, in the hero narrative.

Therefore, in ancient and primitive societies, we find cultures committed to playing the agent role in violent acts, conducting them through symbolic matrixes that work as devices for the preservation of the collective and of a given notion of subject. Albeit on a different scale, the same happens with traditional societies up until the beginning of the modern era, when individualistic ideation gains strength and begins to significantly alter the forms of codification for social practices and values.

That picture assists us in thinking through the relationship between masculinity and violence, even in the face of a dearth of academic works on the topic or the lack of theoretical consensus about the concepts of masculinity, femininity, and violence in the social and human sciences. If that was expected of a man for a long time and even, in some societies, was required of him, we do see traces of that historic tradition in inadequate situations, such as of domestic violence in traffic.

Krüger (1986) states that:

If in the study of altruism we find a rarified theoretical field, the same cannot be said about research on aggressive conduct, notwithstanding the inexistence of a general and widely confirmed theory of human aggression. […] Even though there aren’t consensually or unanimously accepted definitions in Psychology, which per se already represents serious terminological and semantic difficulties for specialists, we can see, however, pronounced agreement among social psychologists in the direction that the agent’s intentionality must be admitted as an indispensable factor in the characterization of aggressive conduct. (p. 60)

It is worth remembering that the lack of consensus in Psychology on the causes of human aggression led Stoner to consider that even though there is very little agreement as to the causes of aggression and as to the best way to control it, there is agreement that aggression constitutes a social problem of considerable magnitude.
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(Menandro, 1982, p. 3). In light of that, Menander (1982) comments that “an examination of investigations about aggression and violence carried out in formally distinct areas of Psychology corroborates Stoner’s finding.” He complements also pointing out that “ample disagreement ensues regarding the very definition of aggression and violence” (1982, p. 3) in Psychology.

Since the object of this study is to investigate the roots of human aggression, and also problems pertaining to the discipline of violence, I focus my interest on the reasons and causes that may be leading a larger and larger contingent of men, at ever younger ages, to become involved in violent situations right in the middle of the technology and information age.

From the starting point of formulating my object of study, the considerations above lead me to ratify my working hypothesis. What interest me, then, is to define a work plan oriented toward my guiding question: If there is a sense in which male social representation is related to violence, how can it be explained and assist us in understanding the reasons that lead to men’s involvement in situations of violence, that question being put both to the empirical subject and to the culture he is a part of. My effort is committed to an analytical perspective that places itself outside the safety of the specialist, who already has a lot of problems to solve, for example, finding some consensus in the definitions of violence and aggression for the human and social sciences.

It is necessary, however, for me to make explicit the definitions adopted for violence and aggression throughout this work. To that end, Menander helped me to know how to use them, and according to his view, I will treat them here as synonyms. In that regard, he says:

Almost all general texts produced in Psychology about aggression and violence use those two terms in the same way: by pairing them together, without major discussion. At some points, each of the terms shows up in isolation, in similar contexts, suggesting that they are synonyms and can be used interchangeably (Menandro, 1982, p. 4).

Since it is not my intent in this work to undertake a revision of those terms in Psychology, I opted for defining violence as an action that runs contrary to the moral, legal, or political order. That way, one can speak about “committing” or “suffering” violence. Violence in traffic, against wife and children, homicides, the use of alcohol and drugs, and also involvement in robbery and stealing are examples of the types of violence dealt with in this study.

Beyond those evident forms of violence, I examine another that is more subtle but can be related. In the context of contemporary societies, built around democratic ideals and the egalitarian credo, we find banalization to be a recurrent phenomenon. It cuts across different social levels and serves as the basis for the ephemeral and transitory character upon which those societies are based. This phenomenon affects male social representation in particular manner, impacting according to a particular type of violence directed at men. Unlike violence perpetrated by man, where the damage is visible, this type of violence reveals itself in a subtle manner, and is directed at forms of social recognition, visibility, and insertion. It is expressed in
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denominations such as feminine man, fragile man, woman within, etc. It can also be present in the different discourses of minorities that treat masculinity as synonymous to domination or in the plurality.

This type of strategic violence, like violence in general, holds within itself a certain dose of ambiguity. In this case, what is expected of a subject is that it not be a subject. The Homer Simpson character is a product of this situation of dissimulated hostility directed against male representation. To contemporary societies, masculinity has become a reference around which the demands of minorities are produced, at the same that its elimination is sought. The demands of blacks aspire to parity with the world of whites, similarly to those of women relative to the world of men, and those of gays who seek the same rights as heterosexuals. That is, at the same time that parity with the rights of men, whites, and heterosexuals is aspired to, their elimination is sought. That is what the banalization of male social representation is for.

The elimination of masculinity in contemporary societies moves away from the meaning the ‘death of the soul’ held to societies organized around myth. In order to exist, the soul required a certain duality. Such duality has ceased to exist nowadays, leading to the mystery of life’s profundity, an accidental mystery above all, being forgotten. An individual does not choose sex or race at birth, those being accidental attributes that, in some fashion, myth seeks to comprehend and monitor.

Myth serves as a device to avoid the ‘death of the soul’ and its implications for the subject. The psychological significance of this symbolism is banalization, that lowering of the individual that deserts the subject of his evolutionary effort (Diel, 1991). Banalization is, then, violence itself to the extent that it divests male representation of its vigor and virility. The Homer Simpson character, for example, is founded on failure and contextualized according to the myth of the eternal loser, which is the expression of evil to societies regulated by the market. He is a rude evil, devoid of vigor or virility, written in small caps, quite different from the feared Devil, who has the vitality Homer lacks.

From the Greeks to the contemporary, social representation of the subject has changed in status and definition. Man’s relationship to his body has been altered many times, in terms of both how he sees himself and how he uses physical force and sex. All that does not eliminate the impact on the subject caused by the confrontation between experience and the memory of knowing oneself a man in the course of human history, and of having to adjust to one role or another as required by the societies.

I see that, as they forfeited the marks of physicality and of sex and named themselves societies of desire, contemporary societies neglected the symbolic and cultural organizations that deterred the emergence of violence, as they lacked the elements through which the sacred was instituted in traditional societies. As a result, contemporary societies stopped investing in the maintenance and promotion of collective organizations and their respective relationship with the divine.

That process accentuates the defacing of patriarchy and its respective values, as well as of the male and female social representation associated with it. In the
transitions to modern individualism, I can see a reduction in the importance of theoretical arguments that associate biological sex with social practices, revealing that the empirical subject disappears to make way for the subject of desire. The emergence of discourses about subjectivity, which lack body and rely on language and desire, presents the subject with a formulation about self that does not conceive of sex as an accident that imprints marks on subjectivity. That way, physical force and the power associated with it are no longer makers of social recognition and visibility for the men in contemporary societies and begin to direct them no longer under mythical prerogatives but as violence.

Men’s involvement with situations of violence can be understood as the expression of a male emotional complex mirrored in feelings of anguish, fear, and insecurity. Through the hero’s journey, as described in different myths, I realize that those operate as managers of that complex within cultures. Male violence, as seen here, results from dissonance in the sense of identity caused by the loss of forms for social recognition that originated from male insignias set by traditional societies.

Since times prior to the Judeo-Christian era, we have found guiding parameters to avoid violence and the crime associated with it. “An eye for an eye” and “thou shalt not kill” are laws, and at the same time, they set behavior patterns and founded a culture. In the West, the relationship between crime and culture is tenuous and very old. By evoking the sacred, the patriarch claimed to himself powers over the community, as well as rigorous and rigid action upon it. The issue of sacrifice, the firstborn, and the laws delineated both the complexity and the proximity between crime and the culture it belongs to.

At present, multiple views with differentiated slants analyze violence according to the conceptual field where it is situated, be it psychic, social, or biological. However, only recently have we seen works that envision possibilities for articulation between violence and masculinity from the perspective of men. Initially, that correlation shows up in gender studies, in particular relative to domestic violence of men against women. Man as the aggressor has become a recurring character in those analyses, which identify him as exclusive heir to the patriarchal system and sole representative of the sexist and authoritarian prerogative.

Different paths led me to works by Keleman, Edelman, Girard, Baudrillard, and Gilmore. Those authors were my main interlocutors, with whom I found the resources to create and develop my argument.
CHAPTER 1

CONTEMPORARY MASCULINITY

*I feel like a man and currently dare to be one.*

Goethe

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE

This book raises the issue of the relationship between violence and male representation and how the transition toward individualism and social transformation phenomena belonging to modernity predominantly contributed to its emergence. I also address the narrative of myths, so that, through it, I can present those that I consider relevant to male social representation in different Western cultures.

I also examine the concept of representation as being one of the operators of modern culture most heavily frayed in the last decades of the 20th century. The intensity of that phenomenon on the level of philosophy corresponds to the emptying out of any meaning and sense granted the collective by Western contemporary societies. Starting at the beginning of the 20th century, hard-hitting criticism against large metaphysical systems and the role those play in the organization of culture fostered the appearance of a new problem for those societies: how to structure social life without submitting to the principle of hierarchy and social class. What would be the implications of that fact for the organization of societies and for the life of subjects? Metadiscourses pointed to how the concepts of difference and power were replacing those of hierarchy and class in the bosom of individualistic cultures, without compromising the necessary procedures for ensuring harmony in social life. Among those procedures, we find investment in the production of identities. In those societies, the sense of identity experienced by the subjects takes a certain priority over collective life and over insertion in social practices. In order to maintain that meaning, it would be necessary to define social representations of subjects in such a way that their demands would find resonance in social life. Thus, the value system of a bellicose society must accord a high value to representations of the warrior, and it must disregard characteristics like cowardice, lack of vigor, and lack of assertiveness. Myths fulfill that role; they indicate what subjects must and must not do, with the difference that in traditional societies such action is an expression of the collective. Mythical narratives define an evolutionary scale for the hero; he must move up on the scale, gradually, until he meets his soul/psyche. Collectivity and myth are in close relationship to one another—a relationship that was transformed along the centuries. Through a comparative study of Greek and contemporary myth, I intend to present some of those changes, as well as the implications they brought for the hero.
representation. Ulysses’ astuteness and wisdom at the service of a commitment made
to his friend Menelaus takes him to Troy causing him to depart from Ithaca leaving
his wife and son behind. The hero’s evolutionary path is marked by the relationship
between his contribution to the community he was part of and the scale of values
defined by it as male insignias. In Eliade’s view (1992), a man only becomes a real
man when he conforms to the teachings of myths, imitating god. Robinson Crusoe,
the typical modern hero, on the other hand, is a representative of the utilitarian world
that holds as a value for itself winning over nature and submitting it to its domination.
It is the myth of the solitary man, without a wife, family, or children.

The crisis of the institutions, a phenomenon of modernity, is already present in
that modern hero’s narrative. If he is compared to the Greek hero, it is possible to
identify decreasing importance given to the collective dimension as a concern on
the part of the hero. In that transition, we can notice that the great battles are no
longer represented as back in the days of the Odyssey or Iliad – public fights that, to
the extent of the hero’s engagement, had the effect on him of elevating his sense of
identity. Hercules and Theseus are examples of that. The alteration in the social axis
for social orientation toward a mechanical society, organized around politics, the
law, and the market, gradually minimized impact over a subject’s sexual identity, as
relates to his representation as a man. Defending democratic causes ceased to have a
connotation that reinforces one’s sense of sexual identity.

That aspect gained prominence in modern cultures, as they adopt investment
in the material to the detriment of the collective as an orientation axis, defining
identity as the subject’s problem, one of an exclusively private order. That type of
investment brings as a consequence a decrease in forms of collectivization, to the
extent that it exempts those cultures of responsibility as agents of forms of social
recognition, visibility, and insertion of the subject’s social representation, at the
example of traditional societies that articulated myths and social organization.
The latter invested in the production of symbolic matrices that encouraged subject
adhesion and cohesion to the community he was a part of.

As that responsibility shifted toward the individual sphere, moving further and
further away from the collective one, social groups gradually emerged that sought
to recodify their social representations, since those did not accord them the desired
recognition and value. The representations of woman, black, and homosexual find
in that shift a harbor for the reformulation of their social representations, as well as
the re-dimensioning of their worth in the public sphere.

Therefore, through alterations to the hero profile, I see a change in male social
representations and the manner in which those articulated to social practices both in
traditional societies and in the contemporary societies of the West.

In traditional societies, there was a continuum that related male representation to
its public and private dimensions, defining which script a man should follow. That
continuum, characterized by pre-Cartesian formulations, did not rely on dualism or
dissention between knowledge and duty and, thus, fostered the engendering of male
social representations with social practices.
The intersection between the religious and the natural and social order is present in the hero figure. Mythical discourse, which relates those three dimensions, is an example of that. The social male representation present in that figure is positivized when it operates as agent for the efforts undertaken by the hero in the direction of social or collective ideals, such as we find in the *Odyssey* and *Iliad*. In them, the hero’s representation corresponds to one of the manifestations of the divine. The divine, according to Girard, must, as an expression of the sacred, be continually followed and revisited by the hero. Descent into hell, trials, and rebirth from ashes are movements that attest to his mobility to travel in the sacred sphere and invent the collective (Girard, 1990).

In the transition to modern individualism, we see a distancing from the sense and meaning accorded to what used to be considered sacred. A religious man, according to Eliade (1992), is not given: He makes himself as he approximates divine models, which are preserved in myths, in the history of divine feats. Contemporary societies relinquish that perspective and begin to configure the subject as solitary and abandoned.

Social representations of the sexes were for many centuries tied to divine prerogative, at the Adam and Eve’s example. As representatives of the divinity, they possess certain characteristics inherent to Him, to wit, androgyny. It is told that Adam and Ever attached back to back and that God, then, separated them with an axe. In some versions, Adam (the first man) was half man and half woman; however, God split him in half and made him into man and woman.

We also find a similar situation in representations of Evil. Certain narratives attribute to the Devil divine origins. In order not to feel lonely, to have some company, God supposedly created the Devil. He was God’s advisor and held him in some esteem, such as God did Mephistopheles.

In those manifestations of the divine, we find his creations marked by violence: The axe stroke to Adam, the fact that the Devil was created out of Divine scorn and became his slave are, then, aspects pointing to what Girard described as “expression between violence and the sacred” (Girard, 1990). At this point, I establish my first articulation of masculinity and violence. As Gilmore (1990) shows us, in different cultures, we find rites of passage that boys go through and whose purpose is to bring them closer to the sacred properly speaking, to make them into warriors, hunters, chiefs, or priests.

In those rites, presented along the book, I identify the expression of violence and pain that the boys cannot demonstrate, that they must bear in order to be socially recognized, valued, and accepted. In those cases, empirical death is of less value than death of the soul/psyche, or of the subject. Sacrifice and sacrificial crisis correspond to that subjective mark on the sociological plane. Killing by way of sacrifice is a way to ensure cohesion and harmony in community life. Crime founds the collective order and, with it, male social representation. Through Oedipus, Orpheus, and Midas, we can think through what must be monitored by the hero; with Hercules, Theseus, and Prometheus, we find the hero fighting against banalization, and we can observe his effort to maintain a connection with spirit.
It is those connections that gradually disappear from the bulk of the modern and individualistic society’s construction process. That distancing became strategic in order that it would be possible to criticize the different social representations circulating in traditional societies. When God separates from the Devil he becomes exempted from Evil, in the same way that, when he splits Adam in half, he exempts the woman from involvement with crime.¹

The whitening of Evil² results from the attitude adopted by modern societies before what Girard (1990) termed “sacrificial crisis.” Articulated as they are around the axis of consumption, hedonism, materialism, and nihilism, those societies are found to be averse to the possibility of recognizing pain and suffering as inherent dimensions to human nature. It was that dimension that sacrificial crises recognized, at the same time that they offered the subject a possibility for dealing with them collectively. The rituals described by Gilmore (1990) inform us that they can be considered sacrificial rites. In them, boys experience, in some fashion, a sacrifice required of them by the community, with the objective of earning social recognition and, through it, earning the gratitude required to defend and fight for it.

In contemporary societies, the representation of the soldier is an inversion of that path for the acquisition of masculinity. Previously, in the traditional societies of the West, a boy was first recognized as a man, to then become a warrior. At the Military Academies the creed is a different one: a subject will only feel recognized as a man after becoming a soldier.

In contemporary societies, men’s involvement in situations of violence can also be thought of as a consequence of those societies’ establishing a distancing from what, in them, represented the sacred. Violence banalization is an expression of male social representation banalization, and that of the symbolic network that articulated it to the various social representations and situated it well relative to them, thus, composing the elements of a “social theogony.” The sacred as revelation of the religious was replaced by a different social organization principle that adopted science as organizing vector. A certain mythical disarrangement became established between primitive and mechanical societies, in Lévi-Strauss’ view (1996).

Individualism accentuated a type of conflict that is quite common in those societies; subjects find themselves at the same time tormented by their own destinies and in conflict with the society they are a part of (Eliade, 1991). That relationship can be found in the story of Faust, or also in Don Quixote’s. One of the characteristics of the modern hero results from the polarization and systematic opposition between individual and society, present in individualistic societies. That caused an emptying out of any possibility for the creation and operationalization of collective symbolic networks, at the example of mythical societies. Weakening of the collective is thought to be an unfolding of the trajectory sacred went through in contemporary societies. Thus, a society is found that did not re-update the sacred as part of a social matrix; on the contrary, after adopting science as its direction-setting vector, it began to ascribe the sacred less value.
Heading toward scientific societies, on the philosophical plane we note the reflections by Kant (1781) and Hegel (1807). To Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, of 1781, the idea is elevated to the divine statute and takes its place. Even if supported by it, the idea puts us before the representation of a speculative system, where religion is considered speculation metaphor. It attributes to thought the great human value, stating that thought requires not the existence and working of the brain, but that, in fact, it is the brain that, among other representations, would not exist or work without thought. As for Hegel, in *Phenomenology of Spirit*, of 1807, the speculation is the identity of the subject and the object. Subject is spirit, which is idea. Thought produces all, and it is in the subject that it is manifested, constituting an argument for the consolidation of the individualistic credo. That credo is present in the narratives of three modern myths: Don Quixote, Faust, and Crusoe. The combination between Idea and History offers speculative thought a possibility for creating and altering the manner in which the different representations of the subject are socially defined.

In modernity, we find multiple possibilities for representation of the subject that, starting in the 19th century, move further and further away from the empirical and the organic. That strengthens the argument that the order of culture opposes that of nature, and predominates over it. The sacred, originally articulated to the cosmos and nature, loses relevance before the thesis for Idea autonomy. With Hegel, we watch the devaluing of body while a living organism, as well as of everything associated with it. Later, it will be the social body’s (collectivity) turn to be pondered as an obstacle to the individualistic vision. Devoid of those “two bodies,” the representation of the sacred ceases to materialize, and along with it, so does the subject representation that provided it support. However, the social tensions represented by the sacred in primitive societies continue to exist in modern societies, except that, while mechanical societies, those lost the symbolic continent that anchored it. In some manner, the social representation of the warrior and of the hunter worked as support for that materialization.

When I refer to the dialectics of clarification, as well as to the implications in the construction of emancipation discourses through which *minorities* gain expression, I am signaling to the fact that modern and individualistic cultures function according to certain operators. In primitive cultures we have myths, and in contemporary culture we have social movements; both add value to the individual and invest in the promotion of subject autonomy.

Redefinition of the social representation of woman, of black, and of homosexual was promoted within the scope of contemporary cultures, but to that end, the situation of victimization those subjects lived in traditional societies was used for some time. Paraphrasing Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir states that women, like everybody, are half victim and half accomplice (Beauvoir, s/d). Feminism, while an emancipatory discourse, comes to remove them from that situation, restoring their status and dignity.
One might also think that the “victim” denomination takes us back to the societies that operated by means of sacrifice and of expiatory victims, where the victim played an important role. The victim “allowed himself to be immolated in order that tubers or fruit trees should grow from his body” (Eliade, 1991, p. 84). The purpose of sacrifice was to appease internal violence and to prevent the explosion of conflicts (Girard, 1990). The body of the immolated divinity became food, and the remembrance re-actualized by myth (representation of the founding killing) plays an important role to the extent that it reminds subjects of what they must not forget, of what happened in primordial time.

In Girard’s (1990) view, sacrifice serves the community as a prevention instrument in the fight against violence; sacrifice serves as violence control. In societies devoid of a judicial system, sacrifice and rite play an essential role. That is not to say that sacrifice “replaces” the judicial system, but it asserts itself in violent manner. The principle of justice often approaches that of vengeance, the same way that, like violence, masculinity reveals itself as something eminently communitarian.

It is worth remembering that, even with all the social transformations, neither the primitive nor the modern are able to contain the dissemination of violence. Nevertheless, there is a perception that contemporary societies have dealt with it in an extremely superficial and banal manner. Nowadays, the banalization of social representations has become an expression of violence; by means of it, the use of “good violence” is authorized in face of what is considered “bad violence.” Social representation has been an operator through which contemporary societies and those of written tradition express themselves. They feed off of that operator to construct their political, judicial, and historical system. I am not analyzing here oral-tradition societies, where the concept of social representation ceases to be a relevant operator.

From these considerations, it is interesting to think about how minority discourses constitute themselves. One can think of systematic criticism to patriarchy as a system that produces a bad violence and that, therefore, must be eliminated. It is a system identified as the promoter of social identities said hegemonic, which as a byproduct, must also be eliminated. A social justice notion permeates the composition of those discourses, which in order to regiment the necessary force to maintain themselves, make use of a dynamic similar to that present in sacrificial crises. Those discourses do not feed on animals or plants as is done in primitive societies. They feed on social representations that are used as a necessary part of carrying out a “sacrifice” and maintaining cohesion among the members of those groups self-entitled minorities.

As mentioned previously, the body of the deceased divinity, or of what represents it, must be eliminated, for that way, group members remain cohesive and near the divine element (what the culture defines as social value). Therefore, male representation and patriarchy are considered a part of Evil revealed in the representation of white, heterosexual, male, which must be eliminated. Interestingly, on an empirical plane, we see that men (not only white men) die more, in the same way that they become involved in situations of violence more; in some way, we
are faced with a type of sacrifice without a symbolic correspondent that accorded sense to the fact. Contemporary societies have no need for male representation as a parameter for intelligibility of the social dynamic. They began to feed on that, seeking more and more complex ways to deepen the belief that it is possible to renounce it, at the example of cloning, \textit{in vitro} fertilization, and \textit{cyborg} techniques.

Paradoxically, it is necessary for male representation to continue to exist in order that individualist credos will prosper, except that no longer in the form of warriors, but rather in that of banalized men, like Homer Simpson,\textsuperscript{3} for example. The banalization of masculinity is part of a social strategy that makes use of alterity elimination to conceive of social reality as virtuality, characterized by simulacra and by the Santa Claus logic (Baudrillard, 1981). That world view finds in the \textit{minority movements} its greatest ally and sponsor.

Even if there are societies like Tahiti’s, where masculinity and violence do not relate to one another in a direct manner, men in the history of humanity have their representations marked by violence, be it as a soldier fighting in a war, a hunter, a street jackhammer operator, a boxer in the ring, or even a criminal. Violence has been recognized, for many centuries, as a masculinity reference and was used as a tool through which subjects felt recognized as men. In some fashion, subjects experience violence as an integral part of their lives, one that melds with them and prevents them from symbolizing. That is an act that was transformed into myth and that, in the present day, makes itself act once more in the form of violence.

In order to think those issues through, I will use, as illustrations, the statements of men that sought the “PAI-24h” Program,\textsuperscript{4} for orientation regarding the experience of fatherhood and involvement in situations of violence. The first question I asked related to how men have been historically implicated in construction trajectory of societies and what male attributes were valued. One example is the warrior representation, needed in periods of territorial and border expansion for the empires. In traditional societies, subjectivity was directly anchored in collective practices that, in turn, developed around social hierarchies. In those, physical strength and honor, while male attributes, were acquired through violent practices, as we see in Chapters 3 and 4. Masculinity is an experience gained through situations of violence, which in the course of history, has been moving away from the physical strength attribute but continues to be identified with potential for caused damage. We went from body-to-body combat to atomic bombs. The damage caused by swords is less than that caused by warheads.

In the transition toward individualistic societies, physical strength, while a masculinity attribute, loses its utility value and is gradually replaced by strategy and by the use of arms. That transition also includes a change in the concept of subjectivity, which becomes no longer a concept of nature to be considered a product of culture. The body, the empirical, and the biological become dimensions that must be overcome. We have entered the era of history, politics, and language, biases conceived as oppositions to the physical world and what is associated with it.
Even so, memory continues to be present and reminds us that, today, where there are words there were, at some point, actions and experience. Certain organicity was lost in that transition and was gradually replaced by discourses and political practices, by a sense of relativity. From that standpoint, thought produced under the presuppositions of clarification would come to strengthen that transition “outside” the traditional world, by disenchanting it thorough the dissolution of myths and by committing this “new world” to knowledge and no longer to imagination.

The individualistic perspective also strengthened the belief that it would be possible for subjects to no longer require the mark of their bodies, nor the perplexity they feel before it. Even if they do not choose whether to be born as men or women, the individualistic culture will tell them that, in it, they will be able to choose. If they are born as men, they will be able to become women; if they are born black, they will be able to become white. In spite of that, however, they have that mark imprinted in their memory and know that their existence originated from an accident that precedes them at the same time that it inaugurates them. It is impossible to deny that mark. That accident, however, was transformed into a representation that came to be interpreted by the culture as a restriction to the modern individualistic vision and, therefore, a challenge to be overcome with the assistance of science and of technology.

The accident, as well as the traditional forms of knowledge transfer regarding the origin of the world and of subjects, became no longer relevant, to contemporary societies. Those societies became committed to the quality of levels of choice afforded subjects and to their multiple roles. Social movements lack that demand and make use of opposition pairs to advance. Violence is a human action present among men, women, blacks, whites, heterosexuals, and homosexuals. It is an accident that was, during a period of history, monitored and denominated sacred.

Man, then, played an important role, and his appearances were linked to collective organization (hunters, warriors, etc.). Every subject’s performance depended on how he used his body, and his body was the expression of his spirit. Through it, he gained social status. The sacred could either bring a subject closer to the “questions” of spirit or take him away, thus, immersing him in banalization.

We notice that in the transition to individualism the empirical subject’s masculinity was no longer required, as its attributes and values were incorporated by culture (work, power, production). The empirical subject (Evil) became a representative of what must be overcome: the organic body, the collective, and the myths. Using Girard’s (1990) perspective to analyze how male representation relates to minority movements, we see that representation has been used as part of the sacrificial crisis. That is the place occupied by male representation in contemporary societies. Toward a society that affirms itself in choice and desire, it is necessary to get rid of the accident principle, which we can also understand as the alterity principle. In that sense, masculinity has been disqualified and banalized. It is against that death that men will fight, by becoming involved in situations of violence.
Considerations about the Investigation Method

In order to define a work plan for carrying out this research, I initially undertook an incursion through Kaplan’s reflections and, subsequently, Feyerabend’s. Those authors have different approaches to defining method and its role in social-sciences and behavioral research. Kaplan proposes that the researcher should initially reach the meaning of the act, that is, should interpret the conduct translated by a particular behavior, and must next seek the meaning of the interpreted action and its connections with other actions and circumstances (Kaplan, 1975). In that sense, we are considering the denomination *male representation* a rule of judgment that works as an operator within cultures, signaling to the empirical subject how he should experience himself.

In that sense, representing is understood as causing knowledge, the same way the object causes knowledge. Thus, male representation is the very object upon which cultures define their masculinity standards, at the example of what we find in myths, in literature, or even in the definition of the male social role.

In order to identify the experiences through which a subject, a member of a Group of Men, denominates himself a man, I organized four meeting structured according to the PAI-24h Program’s plan. The meetings were recorded, and some of the statements by the participants were used in this book. The participants are middle-class men, ages 35 to 50, married, single, or divorced. Their statements provided support for my theoretical argument about the relationship between masculinity and violence.

According to Becker, contemporary scientists have opted for not studying the problems that cannot be solved through procedures typical of a machine, under the allegation that it is more reasonable to apply their resources to problems that can be scientifically manipulated (Becker, 1994). That way, science should avoid becoming committed to an essentially anarchical undertaking. Nevertheless, to Feyerabend (1977, p. 17), “theoretical anarchism is more humanitarian and more likely to encourage progress than its law-and-order alternatives.”

Adopting a different perspective, Feyerabend says that anarchical thought is mentioned as one that can offer subsidy to epistemology and to science philosophy. In that view, it is possible to advance a counter-inductive procedure, trusting that the coherence of works in behavioral science must not be measured by the adjustment of the hypotheses presented to theories already accepted. After all, persevering on the oldest theory does not represent the best choice of a tool to carry out the study in question. Defended theses that contradict well-set theories offer us more investigation elements, which would hardly be identified any other way. Theoretical diversity must be encouraged and uniformity fought, considering that the latter compromises the subject’s development and expression.

The author also states that there is no theory that agrees with all the *facts* in his field. The facts are tied to older ideologies, while conflict between theory and fact
can be a sign of advance in that field. In gender analyses, for example, we find two distinct values for the social representations of man and woman under the rubric of that concept. Similarly to patriarchal ideology, and legitimized by the politically-correct ideology, an inverted hierarchy is established between the sexes. However, at the service of the individualistic prerogative, the minority subject takes the place of the old patriarch. A tradition is thus instituted: The minority is absolute and sovereign in its principles, not requiring any critique of itself.

Becker says that,

even though a few renowned methodologists and science philosophers believe that methodology must focus on explaining and perfecting contemporary sociological practice, conventional methodology does not do that. On the contrary, it focuses on telling sociologists what they should be doing and what types of methods they should be using, and it suggests that they either study what can be studied by those methods occupy themselves imagining how what they want to study can be turned in something that can be studied by those methods. (1994, p. 18)

One of the difficulties for thinking about the correlation between masculinity and violence stems from the lack of theoretical consensus both about the concepts of masculinity and femininity in the social and human sciences and about those of violence and aggression in psychology, as Menandro (1982) and Krüger (1986) demonstrate. For that reason, it was necessary to identify authors whose models made it possible to think through the relationship between masculinity and violence. Before starting the bibliographical research to resolve that issue, I decided to go through the works by the previously presented authors who make some considerations about method.

Even though my initial inspiration was based on the reflections by Feyerabend, I adopted Becker’s perspective, conducting the investigation within the field of work by those two authors, in particular as regards the formulation of problems and concepts treated through research methods in the social sciences. My analysis focuses on how contemporary culture altered social relationships and transformed the value of the subject’s social representation. That phenomenon, made more clearly evident in the transition to modernity, intensified in contemporary societies in the form of individualistic radicalization.

It is known that there are many obstacles to be overcome in research when adopting interdisciplinary approaches. In that sense, I agree with the arguments by Sokal and Bricmont (1999) about the risks involved in restricting scientific investigation to analysis of “discourse,” to “social construction,” or to “myth,” or when ones makes indiscriminate use of natural sciences terminology to advance analyses in the field of the social and psychological sciences.

With the intent to accept those admonitions, I sought to identify works that took the Sokal and Bricmont perspective into account. That was when I came upon the studies by Keleman (1974, 1975a, 1975b, 1979) about Formative Psychology and,
through them, to those by Edelman (1989, 1992), which pursue a biological theory of consciousness, as well as the identification of what is specific in constitution.

The path proposed by Edelman redefines the biological field as one that recognizes subjectivity as the complexity of one of its variants. He points to the existence of a self-organizing process that is beyond natural selection (phenotypical). He thinks about the implications of physical determinism for free will and presents the Theory of Neuronal Group Selection (TNGS) as being a possible base for that self-regulation process. As he presents the basis for biological epistemology, Edelman exposes three moments that correspond to the multi-levels of definition for selection systems. In one of them, he describes the determining condition for conscious behavior, which to him is produced by memory based on values, objectives, and plans with conceptual components that interact with conceptual categorization. That is to say that perceptual category precedes sensation and reveals that experience can be thought of as a combination of both. This suggests that consciousness has morphological properties and makes use of structures to expand its extension through the evolutionary path (Edelman, 1989).

To Edelman, consciousness is a property of morphology, being based on the material and molecular order of morphological structures, on the development of the interaction between phenotype and events and objects in the ecological niche, and on the continually updated relationship with immediate perceptual categories referent to remembered self/not self categories based on value.

Earlier states of primary consciousness were required for the acquisition of language and of higher consciousness, and those offered the base for an increase in social transmission and in intersubjective communication. The establishment of the common sense convention shared through those means (despite the neuronal bases of private and individual categories) and, finally, the development of scientific procedures led to my present view of the world, of biology, and of physics.

The theory of consciousness and the concept of formation developed by Edelman offer to scientific realism and empiricism an opportunity to incorporate the possibility for the development of culture of relational systems like logic and mathematics.

The problem posed by Descartes led science to an unacceptable split, identified by materialistic metaphysics combined with implicitly rationalistic and dualistic epistemology.

According to Descartes (1987),

An adequate theory sheds light upon the nature and the physical and evolutionary origins of consciousness without abandoning the hypothetical realism and materialism that physical scientists apply to the world outside the observer. That is the objective of my theory. (pp. 264–265)

Edelman (1989) reminds us that, when an observer removes himself with his mind from nature, he should not have the expectation of once again finding it in nature. Modern scientists, at the example of a Galilean observer who removed his mind from nature, do not commit – while observers – to being part of the observation
process. That movement can be noticed through an emphasis on constructivist theses used to understand subjectivity to the detriment of any biological model that seeks to comprehend it according to the body referential.

In that sense, Keleman reveals that subjectivity is the body, and the body is its own subject:

Every one of us is a series of living events, an organized network, a microenvironment forming a macroorganism. From that point of view, the body is a living process in continuous organization that feels and cogitates about its own living and form.

He sees the body while inheritance as influencing our bodily form, thus, representing a symbol of our self. The body is a mythical image that helps the subject to comprehend his roles and a multiplicity of paths he identifies with. Adopting Sheldon’s (1970) constitutional typology, Keleman presents the subject according to distinct existence patterns, through which he experiences himself and the world. His definitions are three: mesomorph (one who uses), endomorph (one who seeks), and ectomorph (one who avoids).

Considering personal and inherited history, he analyzes how subjectivity gradually becomes corporified, seeing that it cannot be comprehended in the absence of biology. However, he states that natural selection brought as much damage to comprehending the subjective dynamic as Plato’s essentialism. He starts from the premise that the body is the subject’s destination, seeing “subject” as a corporified creature that continually makes itself, thus, being able to deal with that reality and influencing it, rebelling against it, or even trying to comprehend it. From those considerations, Keleman introduces the notion of corporified myth as an element used to determine lifestyles or social roles.

Starting from reflections arrived at in partnership with Joseph Campbell, Keleman explores the articulation between body and myth and considers myth a history that grows from the corporeal process to orient life and ascribe it values (Keleman, 1999). Myth expresses a vision of the social and personal world; it represents a cosmology and also organizes the attempts and tribulations to be traversed by the beginner.

For different stages of adult life, a myth is a social order that speaks about familiar roles, conflicts and resolution, states Keleman. It is an operator that assists the subject in ordering his life experiences. To him, the journey proposed by both myth and body is a long process, in which a subject lives his inherited histories. Keleman (1999) introduces the concept of somatic imagination following the references of Campbell, who states that myth is a somatic narrative.

To Keleman, the body is considered image, experimentation, and somatic imagination, but not so to Hegel. Hegel defines thought as something that does not require the body, similarly to some contemporary psychoanalysts who consider “the body of psychoanalysis as devoid of organs or flesh” and, thusly, conceive of the subject as a disembodied entity, which modulates itself through language without
a body. To Keleman that investigation nears the order of delirium, something that could make it, in fact, human.

Fortunately, we are no longer at a moment when analysis of social fact must necessarily be subjected to the tools of the political-historical field, nor faced with the blindness imposed by biological determinism. However, what led me to find in Keleman a continent for thinking through the relationship between men and violence is the way he defines body as expression of subjective experience. At different moments of history we find male representation associated with use of the body, be it as warrior or as criminal. Traditionally, social representation was valued by the use the subject makes of physical strength, as well as by his capacity to cause damage. That served as an element for differentiation and classification of men. Both subject and society possess memory; to men that memory makes them feel recognized as such, by the use of force and by the damage caused by it. The violence I study here (homicides, traffic accidents, suicide) does require body and memory; it can be considered as resulting from the use a subject makes of himself.

It was possible, that way, to define the orientation of this work. To that end, I center the investigation on the impact caused for the subject resulting from the alteration of meaning contemporary culture adopts for male representation. Historically, that representation does not correspond to what, for centuries, was considered male memory, the base for conceiving of the different social representations of the subject. In the past, it was necessary to hunt, war, fight, and be feared – that was considered the evolutionary challenge. Nevertheless, currently those attributions no longer correspond to what is required of a man evolutionarily. Changed are man’s relationship to his body, the representation he has of himself, and the use he makes of physical strength, of sex. However, the question remains: How should a subject manage the confrontation between the historic memory of what it is to be a man and adjust to the “new” expectation for his social role?

I concentrate exclusively on analyzing the alterations to male social representation in contemporary culture, those resulting from the transition to individualism in modern societies, where the body is gradually transformed by the constructivist approaches to subjectivity into a “thing” and no longer its own subject. It is my view that, by no longer requiring the marks of physicality and sex, those societies gave up on two elements by means of which the sacred was represented in primitive societies and, therefore, exposed themselves to situations of violence. However, I state that understanding of the problem presented is not confined to a culturalist slant. Through Edelman, one can notice the correlations that exist between the fields of biology and subjectivity, which also contribute to comprehending the relationship between masculinity and violence.

Taking into account the concepts of consciousness and memory elaborated by Edelman, I will analyze the bases of contemporary culture and what currently in them represents male consciousness and memory. I will conduct a mapping of some social changes that occurred in the 20th century, detaining myself on the impact they had on how subjects know and feel themselves to be men. To that end, I will undertake
a critique of the culture, based on the works by Baudrillard and Foucault, attentive to the distancing contemporary culture established relative to traditional narratives about male social representation (myths). I will also examine the neglectful attitude adopted by this society before the need to reorder its symbolic matrix as regards masculinity codes, which suffered the impact of social changes started in the 19th century.

I agree with Feynman when he addresses the use of biological and cultural references to think about human problems:

And going on, we come to things like evil, and beauty, and hope… Which end is nearer to God; if I may use a religious metaphor. Beauty and hope, or the fundamental laws? I think that the right path is to say that we have to look at the whole structural interconnection of the thing; and that all the sciences, and not just the sciences but all the efforts of intellectual kinds, are an endeavor to see the connections of the hierarchies, to connect beauty with history, history with human psychology, and human psychology with the work of the brain, the brain with nerve impulse, nerve impulse with chemistry, and so on, up and down in both directions. And today we cannot, and it is no use making believe that we can, draw carefully a line all the way from one end of this thing to the other, because we only just begun to see that there is this relative hierarchy. And I do not think either end is nearer to God. (Edelman, 1992, p. 2)

On the Subjects, the Interviews, and Some Empirical and Theoretical Data

When I started to listen to the men who participated in the work Groups organized by the PAI-24h Program, I noticed that in their statements they mentioned situations of violence. Rather than with strangeness, they behaved toward it naturally. About that, a 45-year-old man, the divorced father of two men sons, says:

I know that a man knows that in some way in his life he is going to come up against violence, and I learned that, and today I know that which doesn’t kill me makes me stronger; that makes me feel like a man. (My emphasis)

Is there a relationship between that statement and the statistics available in Brazil and abroad, relative to men’s involvement in situations of violence? With the intent to quantitatively define a picture of the motives that “kill” men, I found some data that I consider relevant. The rates at which men become involved in situations of violence with or without death provided clear evidence that the profile of the violence curve is defined by the male population – whether men are the aggressors or the victims.

What interpretation can we arrive at from these data?

Initially, I start out from the concepts of sacrifice, sacrificial crisis, and expiatory victim developed by Girard as a resource to understand the problematics of violence in the context of the culture. Subsequently, I seek to identify the transformations that were taking place within the culture in the transition to individualism, and in
what way they brought impact onto the social representations of subjects. In order to monitor them, I elected a culture operator that was always present at different times in history and that can be used to characterize male social representation: myths.

Before that panorama, it would be possible to think about violence, reflect upon it, but … how about men? What could be going on with them? As mentioned previously, Edelman and Keleman offer a basis for systematizing my field of investigation. Through correspondence and conversations, Keleman presented to me the relationship between the feeling of impotence and male violence. According to him, impotence is something one learns. That realization emerges in his clinical practice with North American men, when he identified hostility as a passive expression of violence. He complements that reasoning, pointing to the summative factor of the transformations brought about by the technological revolution – a revolution that had a definitive impact on the concept of human nature, at the notion of cyborg (a joining of the best in the human race with the best there is in machines), and that also problematized two important elements at the base of traditional male representation: physical force and virility.

In the West, there is a history of male social representation that can be monitored by means of different narratives and that, at the example of myths, serves to describe its origin and also to transfer social values from one generation to another. In mythology, we find tyrannical gods, courageous warriors, and fearless travelers as some of the social representations that provide support for the Greek world. Later, we find the modern heroes. They are less articulated to the collective problematics and more identified with the issues of the individual. We can, then, speak about Don Juan, Faust, Crusoe, and Don Quixote as stories around which male social representation is built up until the end of the 19th century (Watt, 1997).

We then arrive at the end of the 19th century and are confronted with what Le Rider (1992) terms identity crises. The crisis of modernity, expressed through the identity crises that afflicted subjects around 1900, particularly as relates to the representations of men and women, pointed to the need to reformulate social representations, to the extent that those would accommodate the social changes.

If those changes sought to grant subjects more autonomy and social freedom, at the same time, we were watching the sharp decline of everything that was the role of traditions while promoters of a sense of community. That does not mean to say that traditional societies were better than modern ones, but in them there was a sense of community that gradually disappeared and was replaced by another, an impersonal one. The modern world crisis precipitated a different model of society that was no longer normatized by traditions, but rather by politics, law, technology, and the market.

In this type of society, the social representations of men and women became more and more similar to one another and, as such, required the empirical subject to adapt to something that came to regulate the social organization axis: the differences game. In these societies of difference, we identify both a reduction in collective practices and a loss of the notion of alterity (Baudrillard, 1991). The society of difference
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is eminently constituted by means of the political sphere, through the *minority movements*—responsible for the reformulation of social identities.

Those movements are heirs to the individualistic credo and adopt as their form of expression opposition to everything that was traditionally defined in their social role. At Crusoe’s example, traditional became designated as everything that opposes the new social order, which holds the individual as a moral value and no longer adopts the hierarchy principle as an organizing element of culture.

Before that perspective, and making use of the dialectic of enlightenment (Adorno & Horheimer, 1985), I begin to contextualize the changes that were becoming consolidated in modernity. Enlightenment adopted as a focus of concern ridding the subject of fear, vesting him in the role of master. Nevertheless, enlightened society grew to gigantic proportions and gave form to a disenchanted world. Its aim, say the authors, was to dissolve myths and replace imagination with knowledge. In light of that, the woman, black, and homosexual myths began to be reformulated. To that end, it was necessary to invest in social representation that resists that change. Held as the exclusive offspring of the traditional world, that representation became the one that had to be defeated. The *minority movements* are in part the product of these original enlightenment considerations.

*Minorities* seek to reformulate the social identity of the subjects they represent, in the pursuit of new ways to include them socially, thus, affording them recognition and positive worth. Male representation, however, was left without a corresponding mechanism in contemporary societies, given that it was necessary for it to stay where it had traditionally always been, so that it would be possible to provide needed opposition to emancipation, which *minorities* speak for.

Male social representation comes up in gender studies as one that retains in itself the characteristics of the traditional world that must be fought (Beauvoir, s/d; Wolf, 1992). To the dialectic of enlightenment, all mythical figures can be reduced to the same common denominator: the subject. It is to that measure that the collective becomes empty and leaves up to the empirical subject the responsibility to adapt to the “new” world view.

Considering the universality of the male presence in the history of wars, the relationship between masculinity and violence is a constant and traverses different periods of Western history. Wars and boxing are examples of situations where men have authorization to kill and hit, and are socially rewarded for it. What can be considered new in the contemporary landscape is a different form of violence, beyond war and boxing, and that also agglutinates the empirical subject of the male sex without, nonetheless, according value to its social representation: the high rates at which men are killed in traffic accidents. In contemporary societies, masculinity while a mark of the subject’s sex no longer had useful value, becoming diluted and incorporated by individuals of both sexes as a premise of social ideation. I am referring to the emphasis given to competitiveness, performance, and aggressiveness, which in those societies cease to be a mark of masculinity and also become an expectation of feminine performance. In some way, the codes of contemporary culture do not
require male representation, given that *in vitro* fertilization and cloning are ways that it can be considered secondary. This mechanism ends up bringing implications for the alterity principle and its role in contemporary culture. After all, as relates Luís Fernando Veríssimo, we are no longer in a society that had Tarzan, 1920’s hero, as the male representation in effect. But who is, in fact, Tarzan?

Tarzan brings within himself aesthetic and moral qualities. He is considered a school of energy and virtue that constantly produces dreams in the collective imagination. We can consider him a Greco-Roman mythical archetype of the child raised by animals. He is the child of an aristocratic British couple, the Greystokes, who end up stranded in the jungle following a shipwreck. The pregnant woman gives birth to a boy. She dies shortly thereafter, and the father is soon killed by a troop of monkeys. Tarzan is then raised by Kala, a female monkey. In fact, the story is a popular romantic narrative about a solitary hero, a mythical and classical one, where women do not show and, according to Veríssimo, that confirms our hero’s world.

Edgar Rice Burroughs, Tarzan’s “father,” published his first book in 1912. The hero, however, only gained fame in the US a few years before the North American depression of the 30’s. At the time, many men were unemployed, and the social stature of masculinity was beginning to go into decline. Tarzan can be thought of as a limited attempt to revitalize that “outmoded” social representation. He is a survivor. Masterful in all situations, he seeks to dominate the hostile environment. He is considered a hero, a winner, in a culture that still values the visibility of male social representation.

From the transition to individualism to the present time, we observe some important culture changes that had direct impact on men. About 200 years ago, the warrior was quite different from today’s soldier. It was the practices of war that equated masculinity to brutality and to violence, thus, causing the loss of a connection between the warrior and the soul/psyche, which was present in Greek mythology in the hero figure. I consider violence to be an expression of that loss of connection with the sacred, represented by the historical memory of what it is to be a man.

From the 20’s to the 80’s, male representation sinks into collapse and becomes marred. Its worth becomes associated with a social past that no longer exists. Our hero goes into an identity crisis, cannot find his “self,” his relations be it in nature, be it in the culture. Tarzan, Jane, or Cheeta?

The process of banalization of male social representation intensifies, becoming disseminated in the following years by means of mass cultures. Now, banalization transcends identity crisis, or rather, it adds to the negative banalization of the hero’s very physical structure. Tarzan’s physical vigor makes way for the brute force of a Homer Simpson or an Earl Sinclair, from Dinosaurs. If Tarzan is “the lord of the Jungle,” operating as a great protector of the forest, Simpson is a king without a kingdom. 45 years old, married, middle-class, father of three, he is nothing more than a technology regulator. Fat, piggish, and bald, he loves to drink at Moe’s bar and to watch TV, but he hates going to church and his neighbor. In fact, if to us Tarzan...
still refers to physical vigor, and sounds echoes of ontophany and, consequently, of singularity. Homer Simpson is the eternal outcast, a hero constructed from obscurity and negation of male vigor and virility and who serves as alibi for the digitalization of subjectivity and its transformation into simulacrum.

In contemporary societies, I see the relationship between violence and male representation as the product of the banalization that representation is exposed to. Gradually, through dilution of the symbolic matrix upon which were structured traditional societies, male social representation is losing visibility. The rates of men’s involvement in situations of violence escalate in a society where physical power was no longer required and replaced by that of technology, that gave up on sexual reproduction and began to carry it out outside the body (cloning and human reproduction techniques), and that altered labor relations.

When I initiated this study, I thought of violence as resulting from the exaggeration of aggressive actions that caused or exposed subjects to death. Later, I realized that men are exposed to a different type of death, one more complex than the physical one, but even so just as important. I am referring to a death relative to his social representation. From this angle, I started my effort to understand the other meanings that could be associated with men’s intense involvement in situations of violence. What should men do with the memory of warriors and heroes? And as relates to traditional inheritance, what should be given up? Could it be that in contemporary culture a purpose is served by keeping men involved with situations of violence? If so, what might that be?

**ABOUT THE SIMPSONS**

The first season of *The Simpsons* started in 1989. The series was considered the most important television event of the 1990’s.

In the mid-eighties, *The Simpsons* showed up as characters in shorts aired on Fox. Later, in 1987, they became a regular feature of a North American talk show, when they started gaining increasing popularity till their first season as a half-hour series.

In media speak, *The Simpsons* are one of the most important representations of the contemporary North American family, as well as of its lifestyle. The scripts for the series are created with cinematographic narratives in mind, and the topics are variations on issues present in that society. However, the connection with cinematic screenplays gained emphasis with the addition of rock. Movie references are the essence of the show. References, citations, lines, or sequences are ways to insert the language of cinema in the scripts, which make much use of them, from nouvelle vague to productions like Cape Fear, in the “Cape Feare” episode.

Nowadays, cinematic language tells a story or narrates a journey through pathways that, at times, challenge human comprehension itself. Thus, that type of language plays a role similar to that of a storyteller, a metaphor by means of which it is possible to get to the density and the mysteries of a subject’s life. At the example of myth, which is an essential type of story, cinema articulates gods, creative forces,
and a subject’s life. Certainly, not all contemporary stories are myths or manage to gain mythical dimensions; nevertheless, stories told in the movies have a lot in common with the old inspiration that animates myths, particularly as refers to certain thought mechanisms through which ideas and feelings about some human quality are tested. The structural patterns and archetypal characters of myths provide a base for certain modern narratives present in cinema and adopted by the series. The show pays homage to screenplays that vary in style and technical treatment.

One example of that is the episode Dog of Death (1992), a recreation of A Clockwork Orange, by Stanley Kubrick. In it, Santa’s helper is brainwashed similarly to what happens to the ultraviolent delinquents in Kubrick’s film. In the episode titled Lisa’s Pony (1991), the first part was taken from 2001: A Space Odyssey, where Homer is a lazy monkey that rests over the film’s monolith. Allusions to Kubrick’s films are present in other episodes.

The films Citizen Kane, The Last Emperor, and Thelma and Louise are titles that served as reference for the development of some episodes. However, movies are not the only reference for the series. In the beginning, the topics dealt with addressed familiar values presented through easily communicated, simple situations that had an impact on the viewer. As the show evolved and gained acceptance, other topics were gradually included, such as: racism, adultery, religious fanaticism, homosexuality, corruption, and corporate conventionalisms. The language used by Matt Groening, the sitcom’s creator, has no partisan or moralistic characteristics. He sets out to portray dull hicks, easily manipulated by the media, politicians, and religious leaders. The program did not have the same impact in Brazil as in the US. The pace and wealth or references were not enough to capture the attention of Brazilian audiences.

A Few Characters in the Series

Springfield is the name of the town where The Simpsons live, one of the most common in the US. Every state must have at least three towns with that name. Some studies on the series suggest the town is located in Illinois.

Coincidence or not, the tragedy that shook the United States involving a boy who took a rifle and proceeded to his school to kill his schoolmates after killing his parents took place in a town by that name. That incident, repeated in various towns in the US, suggests that the combination of prosperity, violence worship, intolerance, and religious fanaticism promotes a winner-loser system that Americans informally apply to their lives and causes them to arm themselves more and more. In that culture, children learn quite early that being a loser is the same as being dead.

It is interesting to observe that the fact that took place in a real “Springfield” corresponds to the symbolic death of the male social representation depicted in the series. Both reveal a portrait of America.

The head of this household is Homer J. Simpson. He represents a typical American: white, protestant, ignorant, frustrated, heterosexual, obese, and at the same time a
dedicated father and loving husband. Homer is a safety inspector in sector 7G of a nuclear power plant; he drinks a lot of beer while he watches TV, and he has a half-brother from an extra-marital relationship of his father’s.

The owner of the power plant is Charles Montgomery Burns. He is ninety years old and is considered in the show to be the personification of evil. Owner of immeasurable wealth, he is selfish, greedy, and a bad character. He is dishonest and fragile at the same time, and he has a loyal gay assistant who loves him and for whom he has become the only reason to be alive.

Homer is considered rude, impolite, lacking in any sense of civility, a lazy bum who sleeps most of the time he is at work. He is also characterized as being inattentive and incompetent, to the point of even forgetting his children’s names. He is considered one of the funniest characters in the history of television.

Homer’s father is Abraham Simpson; his wife (Homer’s mother) left him early on, and he raised his son with difficulty. He leads an unstructured life and is abandoned to live alone in a nursing home.

Homer’s best friend is Barney Gumble. He is considered a born barfly, an alcoholic Norwegian whose sole purpose in life is drinking. In the show, he is treated as a damaged character ridden with sequelae. Homer has another friend called Larry, who shows up in episodes at Moe’s bar continually drunk.

As far as the neighbors, Ned Flanders and Ruth Powers receive the most attention. Flanders is a religious fanatic who represents a good portion of the American population. Ms. Powers is a divorced and free woman.

There is also another important character in the show called Krusty. His name is Herschel Krustofsky, and he works as a clown on TV. Krusty is a Jew of Polish origin who became a clown against his family’s wishes. He is a born gambler, illiterate, and a bad character. He feels constantly unhappy.

Bart Simpson is the oldest son; he is ten and is in fourth grade. The word bart (from the name Bartholomew) is an anagram for brat, which means badly behaved. Bart is always getting into all kinds of trouble. He does not like to study and always does poorly in school. He likes skateboarding, graffiting, and playing practical jokes above all. He is a Krusty the Clown fan and was elected by the magazine Times (1999) as the cartoon character to most influence Americans’ behavior, beating scores by Mickey and company. On the same survey, he is ranked as one of the top 20 most prestigious types of the decade. Bart is a bad boy, an eternal teenager, a man with no access to adulthood.

The women in the series enjoy a different status. Marjorie Jacqueline Simpson, née Bouvier (Marge) is Homer’s wife. She is 40 and is a dedicated housewife who does not like change. She is also considered the equilibrium point of the family, always with politically correct and pacifying opinions; she is considered Homer’s opposite. There are those who say that if Homer were to evolve someday he would become a Marge. Her tasks range from fixing the garage door to changing diapers, and she is responsible for keeping the family united. She has worked with Homer at the power plant, charged her boss with sexual harassment, and footed Homer’s trip
to India. She was considered by her sisters a brilliant and intelligent student with a promising future until she met Homer, who, according to them, ruined her life.

Lisa is the couple’s second child. She is 8 years old and a girl prodigy; she is in second grade and is considered the most intelligent in the family, cultured, and well informed. The series presents her as the one that inherited all of her mother’s characteristics, including her sense of justice and dignity. Always engaged with the problems of the family and of the town, she is respected by all in the show. Some might doubt that she is the daughter of this family. She is loving, a goody two-shoes, and mad about horses and the saxophone. She is always willing to help Bart to solve his problems.

Marge has two sisters: Patty and Selma Bouvier, single twins. Both antagonize and detest Homer. Marge’s mother is forever disappointed at her daughter’s marrying Homer.

In addition to these characters, the series depicts America’s cultural diversity through various foreign stereotypes, for one example, the Scottish gardener, Willie. Other male characters include a stupid, corrupt, and authoritarian police chief, two incompetent policemen, a swindler of a lawyer, and an unscrupulous doctor who speaks Spanish. They all contribute to the characterization of a scathing and sarcastic portrait of a superficial America made up of enterprising women and failed men.

The Simpsons is one more of the narratives about the sexes, in which Homer embodies the male social representation in contemporary societies. Homer is the banalization of that representation, and he assumes the new male status for contemporary societies. The daily use of this representation is more and more frequent. In that regard, there is a recent character in American cinema that corroborates Homer’s traits. His name is Lester, from the film American Beauty (1999), by Sam Mendes. Lester is a man in his forties hated by his wife and disregarded by his daughter, and he seeks a new meaning to his life beyond the role of an idiot.

Homer and Lester are characters created from the same source: the banalization and defacing of male social representation. When it comes to male characters, both Homer’s stupidity and Lester’s mediocrity are two constants in contemporary narratives. The male characters in the series The Simpsons are decadent and authoritarian, while the females can be considered politically correct, and in line with current social and political trends.

Homer and Lester have a lot in common. However, Lester is murdered, and Homer is not. Above all, American Beauty is a story told by a dead man, who includes in his account the day of his death. Lester is murdered because he tried to step out of Homer’s role; however, in that story, he could not step out of that position, for he is needed to play the role of the idiot, not any other. It is worth pointing out that Lester faces two types of violence in his life: an empirical one, relative to his murder, and a symbolic one, by being portrayed as a loser.

Male social representation in contemporary societies has been restricted to the characterization of male failure, Homer being an example of that. In my analysis, I interpret such restriction to be the expression of one of the forms of violence in this
type of society. The loser is a subject who has lost his personal form and, therefore, proves incapable of decoding, understanding and acting in complex contexts; he is an anti-hero devoid of vigor, vitality, or strength. He is an anti-hero because he is not a winner and, therefore, for this type of culture, someone who must be eliminated.

Violence, then, appears as a possibility of meaning in a subject’s life, to the extent that it is necessary to make oneself present in order that it can be realized, by invoking one’s personal history as a testament of faith and, through it, restituting one’s own strength and vigor.

Homer is an important reference for the series. It is through him that Lisa’s intelligence and Marge’s sense of justice are potentialized and more positivized. Homer’s stupidity is necessary for maintaining this type of family, much the same way as, according to Girard (1990), an “expiatory victim” is needed for sustaining “group” cohesion.

NOTES

1 Cf. data presented in the ABRAPIA report on violence against children and also data that are omitted about violence among women.

2 This denomination is used by Baudrillard in his essay about the issue “Whatever Happened to Evil.” Where he states that a society where the power of prophylaxis, of the extinction of natural references, of a whitening of violence, of extermination of all germs and all cursed parts, of cosmetic surgery on the negative is one that only wants to deal with calculated issues and discourse on Good (the politically correct); it is a society where it is no longer possible to enunciate Evil. The whitening of Evil means that Evil becomes diluted and used by discourses on Good, which become exempted from It as they name themselves representative of democratic ideals. Nevertheless, in order that they are able to circulate, discourses on Good must enunciate Evil, not as bad in and of itself, but as a convention or principle that rejects the Western values of progress, rationality, political morals, democracy, and gender.

3 Main male character in the Fox series, The Simpsons, created in the mid 1980’s.

4 The “PAI-24h” Program was created in 1993 and has as its target audience the male population and maintains services by study groups, workshops, and a database fed by such sources as: IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), ABRAPIA (Brazilian Multi-professional Association for the Protection of Childhood and Adolescence), IASOM/Oslo (The International Association for Studies of Men), UN, APA-Division 51/USA (Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity).

5 As regards a first draft of male social representation, I also used the Thesis for my Master’s in Psychology, completed in 1996 at PUC-RJ (The Pontifical Catholic University-Rio de Janeiro) and entitled: “Male Identity: A Study about Middle-Class Man.”

6 To Keleman, the body is a living process in constant organization and reorganization of itself. The human body is an organism in evolution rooted in its own personal and universal vitality. According to him, the formative approach honors the universal process that grants us life, at the same time that it seeks to mature a personal and social body. In the course of life, a subject’s task is to embody the person that is forming within. See Your Body Speaks Its Mind, p. 2.

7 The men who participated in the activities were between 35 and 45 years of age, divorced fathers for the most part, college educated, and middle class. The statements were obtained in the meetings promoted by the Reflection Groups on masculinity, according to the Vancouver’s Groups plan, developed by Gervase Bushe, in 1992.

8 See statistical data presented in the chapter The First Sex.

9 We see the currency of that masculinity in effect in a conversation with filmmaker Teté Moraes, with her argument for a film that addresses such issues, except that in a perspective from Tarzan to Woody Allen.
Reference to the story of Rhea Silvia and Mars’ sons, who were abandoned on Amulius’ orders, placed in a basket and set adrift on the river Tiber. On the river, they were found and suckled by a she-wolf and protected by a wood-pecker. Later, they were taken in by a shepherd and grew up strong and brave.

I use the denomination ‘banalization’ in this book to refer to a type of violence to the extent that it reveals a power greater than that of weapons and leads to the symbolic death of male social representation.

Some information about the show was taken from The Simpsons Archive, created by Fox and available on the Internet, by Ezequiel Siqueira. The airdates are those for the originals in the US.

The creator of the show, Matt Groening, as well as members of his team, was a Hollywood screenwriter for many years, which lends The Simpsons characteristics similar to the movies.

We do find, in the sitcom, mention of Xuxa, when Krusty the Clown has a Christmas show on TV hosting several has-been celebrities, among whom is a South American sensation: Xoxchita. Krusty can hardly pronounce the name at all, reflecting the failed attempt to launch entertainer Xuxa in the United States. In the episode Cartridge Family (1998), we have a mention of Pele. Those are the only two Brazilian participations in the show.

Being a dedicated father and loving husband are desirable characteristics for the “new man.” What this character points to is that those emerge from a failed individual, a loser.