

THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED:

Mapping Public and Private Spaces in the
Diário de Notícias and *Público* Newspapers¹

CLÁUDIA ALVARES

LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the results obtained in a European-Union funded research project (POCI/COM 55780/2004) on the discursive representation of women in two Portuguese ‘quality’ newspapers, respectively titled *Diário de Notícias* and *Público*. My objective is to draw attention to how gendered media discourse conceptualizes the ‘feminine’. I hope to establish a link between feminist discourse and the journalistic representation of ‘feminine issues’, inquiring into the degree to which media texts have been influenced by either liberal or radical feminisms. First, I will examine the framing of ‘the feminine’ within a news agenda-setting context that draws attention to topical issues, usually ostracized from newspapers. Secondly, the representation of issues linked to the public and private spheres will be addressed, so as to explore the extent to which public space is masculinized and private space is feminized. In effect, both papers’ editorial statutes contemplate the rejection of interference in citizens’ private sphere. The general public interest is not regarded as overlapping with private matters. This paper, however, ultimately claims that the newspapers analyzed devalue to a greater extent issues related to radical feminism than those of the traditional private sphere.

1. This essay stems from a wider project that I coordinated on the representation of women in the Portuguese Press (POCI/COM 55870/2004), funded by the EU and the Portuguese Government. It simultaneously integrates the project that I am coordinating at the moment, titled ‘The Discursive Representation of the Feminine in Portuguese Women’s and Men’s Magazines’ (PTDC/CCI/71865/2006). Although I am focussing here on the representation of the feminine in two Portuguese ‘quality’ newspapers, I am defending that private issues should be taken seriously in a public sphere that is truly geared towards universality. This brings me to my present project, in which I inquire into the extent to which Portuguese women’s magazines can be regarded as constituting a feminist counter-public sphere, which enters in conflict with a more traditional, masculinised public sphere. The Habermasian public sphere, which took pride in alleged universality, therefore may find itself grappling with another type of public sphere, possibly more inclusive of alterity than the masculinised public sphere.

Keywords

Women; Discursive Representation; Public and Private Spheres; Content Analysis; Liberal and Radical Feminisms.

I. Introduction

This paper aims to present a critical analysis of the results obtained in a European-Union funded research project on the discursive representation of women in two Portuguese 'quality' newspapers, the *Diário de Notícias* and *Público* papers, between February and April 2006. My objective is to draw attention to how media discourse conceptualises the 'feminine' as subject and object of texts. I will concentrate on the framing of 'the feminine' within a news agenda-setting context that draws attention to topical issues usually ostracised from the front pages of the press. In this manner, I propose to establish a link between the discourse of academic feminism and the representation of women in the Portuguese mainstream press, inquiring into the degree to which these media texts have been at all influenced by either liberal or radical feminisms.

The debate over what is public and private has been greatly expounded on by both liberal and radical feminists. Although the dichotomy between liberal and radical feminists has opened to include discussions with socialist feminists as well as with post-modern feminists, I am here essentially concerned with the influence of liberal and radical feminism on the way the popular imagination has come to understand the concepts of public and private spheres. Liberal feminism has traditionally emerged as a concrete application of liberal political philosophy to the political and economic inequalities experienced by women, placing emphasis on ideals such as emancipation and individual autonomy as aiding in the promotion of the socio-economic rights of women. Radical feminism, on the other hand, posits a singular feminist essence against a patriarchal universality. The term 'radical' in radical feminism connotes 'going to the root' of feminism. This root is associated with patriarchal gender relations, as opposed to legal systems (as in the case of liberal feminism). Radical feminism bases itself on a dichotomical logic of domination/subjugation, exploring issues related both to the 'place' occupied by women in a production system ruled by patriarchal relations and to the reproduction of these patriarchal relations in the ideological domain of daily life (Strinati, 1995: 197-8). The existing inequality in social relations

of production and reproduction is revealed, according to Susanne Mackenzie, in the dichotomy that equates production with masculinity and reproduction with femininity (1989: 56). By celebrating a feminine universal essence, radical feminism has elected the concept of reproduction as a symbol of women's universalism, investing it with a positive connotation.

Thus, while liberal feminism has privileged a discourse on 'rights and rules' that regulates interaction through criteria of justice within the public sphere, radical feminism has attempted to politicise personal issues, drawing attention to the public relevance of issues allegedly pertaining to the private sphere. By questioning the privacy of personal issues, radical feminism interrogates the boundaries of strictly delimited public and private domains. Due to the media's agenda-setting function contributing to what is publicly thought of as being relevant in any society, this research project seeks to investigate how feminine identity is constructed by the press as being of public relevance. How does this construction engage with debates over public and private spheres that prevail within feminist academic discourse? The conceptual frameworks of liberal and radical feminisms will help us delineate a typology that indicates how public and private have come to be understood within academia. This will then allow us to verify whether or not the press texts analysed reflect in any way the perceptions of public and private articulated by these two currents of feminist theory.

II. Methodology

This project consisted in a content analysis of the newspapers specified. The *Diário de Notícias* and *Público* newspapers were selected as quality papers due to habitually being used as benchmarks when assessing the quality of other Portuguese newspapers. Central to any content analysis is the elaboration of a typology of categories: one or more categories are attributed to each unit of analysis so that the researcher may quantify the frequency of those classifications (Wodak, 2000: 58, 229, 231). On the basis of a typology contemplating categories that define liberal feminism on one hand and radical feminism on the other hand, text units from the two newspapers were coded using the NVivo 6 qualitative research software programme so as to assess the representativity of those categories. For the sake of optimisation of resources, analysis was restricted to the first week of February, the second week of March and the third week of April 2006.

III. Results

Results are presented from a two-fold perspective. Firstly, I will concentrate on the categories that achieve a particularly high rating in any one of the three months analysed in comparison with the frequencies obtained for the same category during the other two months of the time-frame of our project. I will subsequently compare the overall frequencies of the categories for the three months studied, tracing the possible implications of these results for the construction of a feminine identity by the Portuguese mainstream media.

In February, homosexuality in both newspapers scored a higher frequency rate than normal due to the possibility of lesbian marriage being on the agenda. Despite ranking low in absolute terms, transsexuality was given more coverage by both papers in March. This came about because of the abuse and death of a Brazilian transvestite, Gisberta, at the hands of a group of adolescent boys. Maternity was pervasive in the news during April due to the Portuguese Socialist Government's decision to close a number of maternity wards throughout the country with the aim of concentrating services in larger hospitals so as to maximise efficiency.

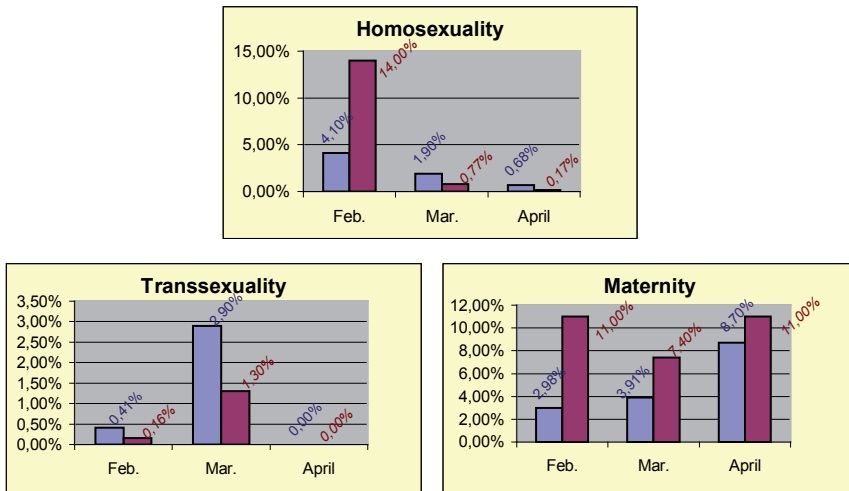


CHART 1 – “HOMOSEXUALITY”, “TRANSSEXUALITY”, AND “MATERNITY”

II. Critical Discourse Analysis of Topical Issues

i) Homosexuality in *Diário de Notícias*

When two lesbians attempted to marry February 1 2006 in Lisbon's 7th Registry Office, they received a great deal of media attention, notably from the *Diário de Notícias*. The issue I would like here to explore, on the basis of van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, is that of the type of 'in-group' the *Diário de Notícias* wished to appeal to in its coverage of the attempt at homosexual marriage. If on one hand the news features of this paper appear to empathise with the lesbians' cause, on the other hand a subtle mechanism of censorship manifests itself.

Teresa Pires and Helena Paixão are first depicted as the active agents of an attempt to legitimate their 'love' before the whole of society. Emphasis is placed on their fairy-tale like 'dream' of marriage, an aspiration to 'recognition and dignification' that would place these two lesbians on par with the majority of the population. Such predicates underscore their difference from the 'in-group' for whom marriage is an unfashionable institution.

The women are represented as having a mind of their own and as openly defying society's conventional social codes. However, they are simultaneously regarded as enjoying 'this moment of exposition, fame and glory in a life that has until now been marked by rejection and persecution'. (Câncio, DN 2006a) We are told that a gardener turned his hose on the two lesbians, because they dared to walk a street hand-in-hand. This example connotes lesbianism as offensive to the masculine psyche, which cannot accept the idea of the 'uselessness' and 'powerlessness' of a hose, a hose that then must be turned on the two women in a revengeful act of masculine affirmation.

Both have collected, throughout their lives, 'insults, humiliations, betrayals and abandonments', leading them to leave Lisbon and seek refuge in a more tranquil town. The predicates used to depict their lives until this moment of media frenzy – and perhaps salvation? – point to a sort of Christian martyrdom, a permanent suffering which they only now are openly confronting. Victimhood is thus contrasted with media limelight: whereas they were once visible 'victims', a target to be pointed at by the 'in-group', they are now visible 'agents', attaining the dignity they crave through a short-lived media infatuation with two women starving for fame.

ii) Homosexuality in *Público*

While the February 1st edition of the *Diário de Notícias* dedicated its first two pages to news features on Teresa and Helena's attempt to marry, *Público's* first two pages for that same day were dedicated to the foreseeable success of Ang Lee's 'The Secret of Brokeback Mountain' at the upcoming Oscar Ceremony. The film, which narrates the romantic entanglement of two gay cowboys in the United States of the 1960's and 70's, is hailed as breaking the film industry's conventional codes, broaching a 'difficult and controversial' theme (Siza, 2006a). Because the topic of lesbian marriage can be assessed along similar lines, it is better introduced, according to *Público's* logic, by an international film agenda that is the target of a certain elite cultural discourse. *Público's* discourse on culture posits a 'self' moulded in the best tradition of Western liberal values, namely freedom and tolerance.

Teresa and Lena are scantily referred to in the main news feature on page 12 dating from February 1 (Branco, 2006b). In fact, they only appear as subjects in the first sentence of the first paragraph of the article, when we are told that they will try to marry in Lisbon's Seventh Registry Office. By the second phrase, their agency is already colonised by that of a petition in favour of gay marriages that 'counts MPs amongst its subscribers'. From then on discourse is completely centred on the positions that political parties have on the issue, namely whether or not they intend to defend an alteration of the Civil Code in Parliament.

In the classically least important position of a journalistic text, that of the last paragraph, Elza Pais, president of the Commission for the Equality and Rights of Women, under the tutelage of the Portuguese Government, gives her seal of approval to the lesbians' initiative for placing discussion on same-sex marriage on the political agenda. This provides a nice conclusion to a 'difficult and controversial' matter for a newspaper that values tolerance: the gist of the earlier paragraphs pointed to the irrelevance of the issue, there being a host of significantly more important topics on the political agenda; the last paragraph, however, denies the triviality of same-sex marriage in accordance with what might be termed a semantic strategy of 'apparent concession' (van Dijk, 2005: 202-203). By giving voice to this 'apparent concession' at the end of the news piece, the feature returns full circle to the beginning, when we are told that the lesbians wish to marry. The fact that they appear at the beginning and end of the text masks their absence from its body.

Distant from first-page notoriety, the theme of gay marriage is again taken up by *Público* under the title 'Registrar Decides Today on Allowing Marriage between Ter-

esa and Lena' (Branco, 2006c): having the previous text given us scant information on these two women, it comes across as odd that they are now referred to by their first names, having the nickname 'Lena' even replaced the more formal 'Helena', in a gesture that evokes intimacy. The registrar is represented, much in the same manner as in the *Diário de Notícias* paper, as having the authority of a father who can 'veto' the whims of two naughty children. In the paragraphs in which Teresa and Lena appear as subjects, they are essentially posing for photographers, bombarded with questions by TV journalists from international channels, in short, they are performing on a stage for all to see.

iii) Transsexuality in *Diário de Notícias*

Transsexuality, a theme that is usually absent from the *Diário de Notícias's* pages became conspicuously present for a brief moment when a Brazilian transvestite, Gisberta, was tortured and killed by a group of boys, between 11 and 16 years of age, who were living in a Catholic correctional home. The focus on the incident was very much juridical, centring on the condemnation of the youngsters.

The first article on Gisberta's death alludes extensively to 'habeas corpus', without once defining what this legal term means to the ordinary citizen. The descriptions of the punitive measures inflicted on the minors are intricate, ranging from internment in correctional centres to preventive imprisonment in the case of the 16 year old. Gisberta, who is notoriously absent from the text after making a brief appearance in the lead, resurfaces in the last phrase as a passive subject who will be remembered at a vigil service held that very evening. The emphasis on the condemnatory measures to which the minors will be subject to serves to emphasise the difference between the 'civilised' conduct of the readers' 'in-group' in contrast with the brutal intolerance of difference on the part of the young ruffians. A moral consensus is articulated around the fact that deviant behaviour must be rightfully punished.

The need to atone for Gisberta's death through justice is further addressed in another text. We are told that Gisberta had distanced herself from family and that it was thanks to a common friend that family members were informed of 'her decadence, disease and, finally, death'. The implication is that Gisberta lived in social isolation from 'normal' family life, a normalcy that the readers' 'in-group' can easily identify with. We are left with the sensation that this rupture with family is in itself deviant, a deviance that was punished according to the laws of karma.

iv) Transsexuality in *Público*

Despite also concentrating on the punitive measures inflicted upon the minors, *Público* appears to be particularly interested in whether or not Gisberta died by drowning. The title ‘Exams Confirm that Gisberta Died by Drowning’ (Laranjo, 2006d) confirms that Gisberta was indeed a victim of homicide, having been thrown into a well still alive, and not ‘simply’ a victim of corporeal offence. The insinuation, camouflaged by juridical terminology, is that the difference between the two alternatives is significant, as if ‘corporeal offence’ were indeed something transvestites might be moderately used to.

The issue of whether or not the youngsters involved in the crime were conscious or not of Gisberta being alive before throwing her into the well is allegedly fundamental to the State Prosecution Service. *Público* places itself in the latter’s role, only to shroud its concern over the ‘morality’ of the youngsters beneath a denotative interest in the juridical mechanisms of the process. What I am affirming is that *Público* has a vested interest in articulating a consensually normative view that the youths’ behaviour is wrong. However, ‘morality’ is something that *Público* wishes to refrain from exercising on any explicit level, for it goes against the ‘urban *chique*’ of the ‘in-group’ it wishes to appeal to.

v. Maternity in *Diário de Notícias*

Contrary to *Público*, which gives extensive coverage, in its April 16 issue, to the closure of a series of maternity wards by the Portuguese Government, the *Diário de Notícias* remains curiously silent on the issue. However, despite not pronouncing a word on the topic during that entire week – ranging from April 15 to April 21 –, which may be indicative of an internal agenda that remains indifferent to external politics, the focus on maternity appears to have been ‘transferred’ to other health issues linked to maternity, namely those of infertility and congenital foetal anomalies.

The *Diário de Notícias* ran two news features on these topics under the titles ‘Social Pressure Affects Infertile Couples in the Cradle of the Nation’ (Silva, 2006b), alluding to the city of Guimarães as the residence of the first King of Portugal, and ‘Foetal Anomalies in Amarante County’ (Silva, 2006c). The first feature, which bases itself on the results of a study carried out by two researchers, informs readers on the high birth rate and low aging population rate of the county. However, due to high industrial economic activity, this region also boasts a higher than average expression of infertility, possibly due to environmental causes. The gist of the article points to social pressure

on young couples as particularly intense in Guimarães, due to both traditional family structures and a not quite urban setting being in place.

‘In a case in which the infertility factor was precisely male, a woman said that she heard her mother-in-law, for example, telling her son to ‘find another wife’ because she wanted to be a grandmother.’ (Silva, 2006b)

Interestingly, the text stresses that the infertility case here referred to was male, as if, had it been female, the mother-in-law’s exhortation would have been more comprehensible.

In effect, statistics point to a proportionally higher rate of congenital foetal anomalies in Amarante County when compared to the rest of the country. Six cases of serious foetal malformations between 2003 and 2005 resulted in legally induced abortion (Silva, 2006c). All expectant mothers lived in the same township, Fregim, situated in Amarante County. *Diário de Notícias’s* discourse on the matter is medical, attributing the malformations to environmental factors. The types of anomalies detected in pre-natal diagnoses are explained in detail although none of those would-be mothers were actually interviewed, perhaps indicating their refusal to discuss the subject. We are told that two of the cases occurred in a traditionally high-risk group of ‘young (and single) mothers, who were not using contraception’ (Silva, 2006c).

Curiously, medical discourse usually emphasises the high risk of pregnancy in older women, but here the fact that these mothers are young – and, most importantly, single – appears to translate into a pernicious factor for pregnancy. Medical discourse may thus be serving as a veil for a normative social consensus condemning pregnancy in unwed mothers. Later, we are told that half of the six cases referred above regarding serious malformations were detected in a private medical clinic in Amarante, the other half being diagnosed by the Amarante public hospital. Despite refraining from alluding to the Government’s decision to close various public maternity wards throughout Portugal, the newspaper is stating the importance of maintaining the public health system operational. Proof of the latter’s importance resides in a public health unit having detected half of the cases of congenital foetal anomalies in that particular region of Portugal.

vi. Maternity in *Público*

The category ‘maternity’ received particular attention from *Público* on February 16 2006 due to the Health Ministry’s decision to close down nine of the fifty maternity wards in the country. ‘Margarida Can’t Give Birth in Barcelos Any More’ (Campos,

2006e) and ‘Protests Against Announced Closure’ (Campos, 2006f) are the titles of the two main news features on the topic. The titles evoke the population’s resentment against what is regarded as an unfair measure taken in the interests of economic rationality. However, in both cases, the closure is already understood as a *fait accompli*, something against which the common citizen might protest against but all to no avail.

One news feature opens by focusing on a human interest story, that of hairdresser Margarida, who had a wonderful maternity experience in the hospital of Barcelos three years back and will now, pregnant with her second child, be prevented from repeating that experience due to ward closure. This human interest story rapidly becomes a public interest feature due to this particular case being a symbol of what will happen to the general population affected by the Government’s measure. However, the subsequent development of the news story adopts a medical perspective on the ward, whereby the reader is informed on the few stays for delivery, the decrease in the number of births, the limited number of doctors, the existence of overworked health professionals and the precarious conditions for babies with serious pathologies who have to be transported to Oporto for treatment.

‘The two rooms, which allow for four simultaneous child-births, are empty and few women are visible. “We have given leave to some patients this morning”, hurriedly explain the doctors...’ (Campos, 2006e)

The predicate ‘hurriedly’ insinuates that the doctors are covering something up, thus giving a more positive impression of the functioning of the ward than is true to reality. By supporting the Government’s discourse on ward closure after having given us some elements to assess the disadvantage that measure, *Público* seems to be adhering to a semantic strategy of ‘apparent empathy’ – as if to say, of course these populations will be negatively affected by the Health Ministry’s decision, but at the end of the day women will be giving birth in much safer conditions in larger hospitals.

III. Is the Personal Political?

In general, it can be said that *Diário de Notícias* is more attentive to issues of the private sphere than is *Público*. However, *Diário de Notícias*’s broaches themes such as homosexuality and transsexuality, which usually remain ostracised from mainstream newspapers, either from a normative standpoint or else simply ignoring them. *Público* focuses far less than *Diário de Notícias* on matters of the private sphere.

However, it has a preoccupation with keeping a ‘modern’ semblance, seeking to situate issues that may be on the agenda within a wider ‘European’ context, the values of which are those of the Enlightenment. The issue of gay marriage, for example, was framed by the success of the film ‘The Secret of Brokeback Mountain’ at the Oscar Ceremony of 2006. As such, the topic definitely had its importance as a ‘spectacle’, but no more than that.

Despite giving more attention on a daily basis to the fusion of public and private spheres, *Diário de Notícias* does not differ substantially from *Público* in the overall frequency of the most common categories.

CATEGORIES	PÚBLICO	DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS
Liberal Feminism	41.3%	51.6%
Radical Feminism	12.5%	14.8%
Liberal Feminism Equality	36.6%	45.6%
Liberal Feminism Autonomy	22.0%	27.6%
Influence	15.2%	17.0%
Female Body	9.7%	12.8%
Cause Promotion	10.0%	9.1%
High Hierarchy	9.2%	8.4%
Conjugal Relationships	6.0%	9.7%
Maternity	5.2%	9.8%
Political Visibility	7.1%	8.2%
Judicial Complaints	4.6%	5.3%
Celebrity	4.1%	5.8%

TABLE 1 – GLOBAL AVERAGES FOR MOST FREQUENT CATEGORIES. SHADED AREAS REPRESENT THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGES WITHIN EACH CATEGORY.

Indeed, both newspapers defend liberal feminist values, with a stronger focus on equality than on autonomy. The frequency rates for the categories ‘influence’, ‘cause promotion’, ‘political visibility’ and ‘celebrity’ do not differ greatly between the two

broadsheets, indicating the existence of a certain consensus regarding the representation of women in the public sphere. The greatest discrepancies in frequency rates between both newspapers pertain to issues of the private sphere. In effect, the categories conjugal relationships, maternity and female body appear considerably more often in *Diário de Notícias* than in *Público*.

These results indicate that *Público* is not particularly comfortable in dealing with matters of the private realm on a daily basis. When *Público* does deal with matters of the private sphere – such as maternity – it attempts to link this topic to the traditional public sphere. For example, first-lady Laura Bush, French Social MP Ségolène Royal and French feminist author Simone de Beauvoir are all referred to in the context of at times contradictory subject positioning between motherhood and the fulfilment of ‘professional duties’. It is as if *Público*’s focus on a private sphere issue such as maternity were in part redeemed by the focus on women who have high public sphere visibility and yet are mothers. Curiously, it is precisely when *Público* feels threatened by the private sphere that it manages to reflect a non-compartmentalised view of private and public spheres.

However, the fact that *Diário de Notícias* reveals a greater permeability to the private sphere does not mean that it is significantly more in tune with radical feminist issues. In fact, it appears that the latter are broached by both papers due to topicality of themes that are usually ostracised from the media agenda. It is precisely in this context that the issues of homosexuality, transsexuality, reproduction – under the form of infertility and congenital anomalies – make their appearance.

Radical feminism emphasises the affirmation of a specifically feminine universal essence that opposes the normative logic of patriarchal values. As such, the possibility of defining a specific form of female sexuality under the generic label of ‘homosexuality’, as well as specific characteristics of the female body – which exceed the idea of gender as performativity (Butler, 1999: 33) – under the generic label ‘reproduction’ are themes that are on the radical feminist agenda. Because radical feminism, in its search for the affirmation of an essence, at times puts to question a certain heterosexual normativity (Thompson, 2001: 14), mainstream newspapers such as *Diário de Notícias* and *Público* prefer to stick to the more conventional liberal feminist discursive framework that centres on ‘rights’ as an affirmation of female autonomy and equality.

IV. Discussion

While Myra Macdonald argues that ‘...private space is at once valued as a peaceful sanctuary, and yet devalued as that non-public space which we worry about only when its aberrations filter through into the public arena’ (1995: 48), I would suggest that both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* devalue to a greater extent issues related to radical feminism than they do those of the traditional private sphere. However, radical feminist themes, namely those related to sexuality, reproduction and the gendered body are closely imbricated with those of the private sphere. Radical Feminism intends precisely to draw attention to the way women’s understanding of themselves has been constructed within a patriarchal frame of reference (Thompson, 2001: 12). Bringing out certain issues linked to oppression in the private sphere, namely those of sexual orientation, gender identity and reproduction, would presumably draw attention to the patriarchal logic of the public sphere. Both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*’s coverage of such issues sheds light on them as isolated ‘rarities’, the topicality of which may, at times, drive them to the front pages of ‘respectable’ newspapers.

In effect, both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias*’s editorial statutes contemplate the rejection of interference in citizens’ private sphere. The general public interest is not regarded as overlapping with private matters, as if citizens’ public personae constitute manifestations of ideal standards suitable to particular situations (Goffman, 1962: 35, 44) – namely that of newspaper reading – which do not come under the aegis of the private sphere. By fulfilling the expectations of the readers as idealised public personae, both *Público* and *Diário de Notícias* convey a masculinized idea of ‘imagined community’ (Anderson, 1983) that trivialises the private.

We can point to the frequency rates of women’s representation in the public sphere – 24.3% in *Público* and 27.3% in *Diário de Notícias* – as indicative of either women’s low visibility in the public sphere, or women’s growing visibility in the public sphere, depending on the perspective. More interesting than affirming whether or not women are in fact visible in the public sphere is, to my mind, the fact that matters of the public sphere continue to be more prevalent than those of the private.

‘Women, the guardians of ‘personal life’, become a kind of dumping ground for all the values society wants off its back but must be perceived to cherish: a function rather like a zoo, or nature reserve, whereby a culture can proudly proclaim its inclusion of precisely what it has excluded.’ (Williamson, 1986: 106)

I would take issue with this affirmation, claiming instead that a process of ‘inverse colonialism’ may be currently in place, with a significant proportion of space being allocated to women in the public sphere. The problem, however, is that the same proportion of space is not allocated to gendered ‘personal’ issues, as if woman must travesty herself to a patriarchal conception of power and visibility so as to be heard.

In other words, woman’s movement from ‘object to subject’, through the expression of a ‘liberated voice’ (Hooks, 1989: 9), takes place along masculine lines. While traditional liberal feminist conceptions would centre on the analysis of women’s visibility or lack of visibility in the public sphere, drawing conclusions on the success of the struggle for rights from the degree of that very visibility, I would argue that the move ‘from silence into speech’ is not effected by ‘iron ladies’, ‘women warriors’ or successful career women who manage to catch the media’s eye. Rather, this move would be the result of a turning of media attention to the private sphere in a non-sensationalist manner.

The problem, however, is that the very structure of the newspapers analysed reinforces a masculine conception of what is deemed to be important for readers, with clearly delineated ‘political’, ‘economic’, ‘society’, ‘sports’ sections, as if the world we live in corresponds to compartmentalised camps. Indeed, the internalisation of the feminist dictum ‘the personal is political’ by newspapers would be equivalent to a Freudian ‘return of the repressed’ (1993 [1913]: 141), whereby Portuguese mainstream texts would perhaps cease to reveal the symptoms of a need to express the idea that both men *and* women share a private sphere, the relevance of which has been systematically downplayed due to its habitual connotation with the feminine.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anderson, B. (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.
- Butler, J. (1999), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, London: Routledge.
- Diário de Notícias* (2007), ‘Estatuto Editorial do *Diário de Notícias*’, June 22.
- Diário de Notícias* (2006a), ‘As noivas que querem mudar o Código Civil’, 1 February: 2-3.
- Diário de Notícias* (2006b), ‘Pressão social afecta casais inférteis na cidade berço da Nação’, 15 April: 20.
- Diário de Notícias* (2006c), ‘Anomalias em fetos numa freguesia em Amarante’, 17 April: 18-19.

- Freud, S. (1993), *The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis: A Contribution to the Problem of Choice of Neurosis*, trans. James Strachey. In *On Psychopathology*, ed. James Strachey, London: Penguin.
- Goffman, E. (1962), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Hooks, B. (1989), *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*, Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Macdonald, M. (1995), *Representing Women: Myths of Femininity in the Popular Media*, London: Edward Arnold.
- “*Estatuto Editorial do Público*”,
<http://static.publico.clix.pt/homepage/site/nos/Estatutoedpublico.asp>, *Público*.
- Público* (2006a), ‘O Segredo de Brokeback Mountain lidera corrida aos Óscares’, February 1: 2-3.
- Público* (2006b), ‘PS e PSD desvalorizam debate político sobre casamento entre pessoas do mesmo sexo’, 1 February: 12.
- Público* (2006c), ‘Conservador decide hoje se autoriza casamento de Teresa e Lena’, 2 February: 14.
- Público* (2006d), ‘Exames confirmam morte de Gisberta por afogamento’, 10 March: 24.
- Publico* (2006e), ‘A filha de Margarida já não vai nascer em Barcelos’, 16 April: 22.
- Publico* (2006f), ‘Manifestações contra encerramento anunciado’, 16 April: 23.
- Thompson, D. (2001), *Radical Feminism Today*, London: Sage.
- Van Dijk, T. (2005), *Discurso, Notícia e Ideologia: Estudos na Análise Crítica do Discurso*, trans. Zara Pinto-Coelho, Porto: Campo das Letras.
- Williamson, J. (1986), *Woman is an Island: Femininity and Colonisation*. In *Studies in Entertainment: Critical Approaches to Mass Culture*, ed. Tania Modleski, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.