

# Imagining the Other: Constructing Gender Models through The Spanish Press During the Franco Regime

Yuliia Bachynska<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(PhD student of the Faculty of History and International Relations, Zaporizhzhia National University (ZNU), Ukraine)

**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the construction and dissemination of gender normativity in the Spanish press during the Franco regime, focusing on how it was represented through images of the 'other'. Gender polarisation and stereotyping were woven into the dominant ideological narratives of Francoism. By using discourse analysis to characterise the concepts of gender presented in key Spanish newspapers and magazines of the period, the main trends and systemic features of normative models of masculinity and femininity articulated through the press were identified. Franco's regime actively used the press and the media in general as an instrument of ideological influence, discipline of society, and cultural hegemony. By shaping public perceptions, he controlled not only gender relations and standards of behaviour, but also laid down value guidelines that influenced subsequent generations of Spaniards. This study analyses the intertwining influences of media resources, ideology and gender policy in integrated authoritarian social practices. It offers a key to understanding how authoritarian regimes use the concept of "the other" to consolidate and marginalize non-conformist identities.

**KEY WORDS:** gender models, the concept of "other", the construction of identities, the regime of F. Franco, the Spanish press.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The study of the problem of forming the image of the "other" allows us to understand the principles of constructing individual and group identities. Studying the dynamics of the changing image of the "other" in different historical and cultural anthropological contexts helps to understand how social, political, and economic factors influenced the formation of these images. This topic requires additional attention from the academic community, as it is part of a broader problem: the manipulation of public consciousness by anti-democratic political regimes.

In the context of Franco's regime, authoritarian rule and censorship were a factor of political, social and ideological pressure. The press, under pressure from censorship by the official authorities and the church, became an instrument for imposing messages and ideologies of the regime. In the context of the Francoist policy, gender stereotypes and prejudices, the creation of an image of the "other" were a factor of social inequality, discrimination and gender polarization.

Linguistic analysis is a necessary tool for identifying linguistic constructions, clichés and metaphors associated with "other" groups, as this area is a powerful tool for creating and maintaining relevant identities. The analysis of visual materials presented in the press will help to reveal the methods of shaping public perceptions, standards and stereotypes through visual images. Such influence is exerted through the use of established gender roles, certain standards of appearance and beauty, discrimination or biased coverage of gender identities that do not conform to established ideas of social roles.

Inbal Ofer's article analyses the construction of the female gender model on the pages of "Teresa", a magazine for all women (OFER, 2017, p. 125). The study of gender issues in the right-wing political environment through the prism of relations between gender and class has helped to identify the factors shaping the model of normative femininity. Teresa Fernández Ostos and Irene González Dugo studied the practices of shaping the image of women used in the magazine "Consigna" (FERNÁNDEZ OSTOS, GONZÁLEZ DUGO, 2014, p. 318). The authors examined the peculiarities of

using the tools of ideological influence, depending on the target audience. Vanessa Tessada Sepúlveda compared the approaches to the implementation of the patriarchal discourse of the Franco and Pinochet regimes through the press on the example of "Y" and "Amiga" magazines (TESSADA SEPÚLVEDA, 2012, 271-273). The author compared the gender concepts of the two authoritarian regimes and the problems of their implementation in real life. Catalina Fuentes Rodríguez studied the peculiarities of implementing the ideological postulates of Francoism through gender models on the example of publications in the Spanish press (FUENTES RODRÍGUEZ, 2015, 237-239).

The source base of the study consists of periodicals such as "Y", "Consigna", "Atalaya toledana", "Ayer y hoy", "Vertice", "Gente, lugares y cosas de La Mancha", "Boletín informativo de la Guardia de Franco" and "Guardiana".

## **II. PRESS AS AN AGENT OF CONSTRUCTING GENDER IDENTITIES**

Cultural representations and certain gender images were implemented in the public consciousness through the press as one of the main channels of communication and public discussion. These images contained a certain set of maxims about the other, which were implemented in the creation of texts.

The specificity of gender models represents the range of ideas about the "other" that the press of the time created. Empirical materials demonstrate the connection between gender discourse and socio-political processes. The subjective beliefs of the authors of magazine articles and editors, as well as the value judgments about gender relations, demonstrate the framework of gender discourse within Francoist Spain.

The press was an important means not only of informing but also of shaping public opinion on important issues of public life. However, authoritarian regimes, including Franco's, used their power of influence to consolidate their power. It is difficult to overestimate the significant contribution of the press to the construction of social reality through the interpretation of events and phenomena. The transmission of information was sometimes accompanied by the reproduction of social stereotypes that reproduced clichéd, exaggerated, and sometimes even ephemeral qualities attributed to a particular group. In this article, we will look at, among other things, gender stereotypes as a factor in shaping the image of the other.

The standardized and unified interpretation of social phenomena by the press, given the conditions of censorship and state control, relayed gender stereotypes. They were a factor in the perception of gender identities through the prism of "otherness".

The representation of gender models through cognitive structures that contained false knowledge and expectations about them was a distinctive feature of public discourse under Franco's regime. The understanding of reality through the image of the "other" reflected the cultural context of Spanish society, in which femininity and masculinity were significantly different realities. The gender models replicated in newspapers and magazines reflected the transformation of ideas about femininity and masculinity.

## **III. NORMATIVE MODEL OF FEMININITY AND IT'S REPRESENTATION**

Femininity was viewed through the prism of androcentrism. It was opposed to masculinity as an absolute opposite. This can be seen in the material about the activities of Maria Antonescu, the wife of I. Antonescu, the Romanian dictator during World War II. Her "charity" was described as a reflection of her deep moral feelings - "...applying to her affairs a rare intuition and a way of looking for details and solutions that is purely feminine." (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1942, p. 17). The feminine was another dimension of being. A woman was seen exclusively in the role of a wife and mother, responsible for the household and raising children. Any deviations from this norm (e.g., career ambitions, unmarriedness) were perceived as a threat to the social order. Women's sexuality was strictly controlled, and any manifestation of independence in this area was seen as immoral.

Magazines aimed at the female audience often published articles and essays of a moralistic nature that dealt with the problems of private life and love relationships. One of these fictional narratives was written by a man who told the story of what he considered to be an unusual girl. "Eliza liked to talk about general things. It surprised me because it was unusual for a woman. First of all, she was interested in the following question: is absolute mutual understanding between a man and a

woman possible?" Her reflections and field of interest went beyond the established ideas of femininity (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1942, p. 18).

The issue №71, 12/1943, was notable for its cover, which depicted the Virgin Mary with the infant Jesus in her arms (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1943, p. 1). Francoist propaganda often appealed to the image of motherhood as the embodiment of a woman's true purpose in life. It was a symbol of tradition, family values, and moral purity. This image is part of a broader context of patriarchal ideas about women as guardians of household welfare and keepers of national traditions. This was the manner of the publication dedicated to the sculpture "Mother" by Victorio Macho (MACHO, 1955, p. 3). Such stereotypical gender models reinforced the postulates of Francoism about social unity, discipline, hierarchy, and service to a single goal - the prosperity of the nation and the state. However, the regime used such gender role models precisely because of their connection with traditional notions of Spanish society.

Advertisements for products targeted at a female audience typically used the image of an "ideal woman", cultivating the idea of preserving "eternal youth" and limited beauty standards. Advertisements for decorative and care cosmetics used clichéd techniques, depicting young women according to the beauty canons of the 1940s: thin eyebrows, long eyelashes, plump lips and wavy hair. However, women were also reminded that excessive use of decorative cosmetics can be perceived not only as tasteless but also as immoral. "Just a little red on the cheeks, a natural red on the lips, a little powder that matches your complexion, a simple tint on the eyebrows and eyelashes, and that's it. It is not much, and yet it is a lot because it is the difference between a beautiful woman and a cold, unattractive woman" (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1942, p. 27).

The emphasis on a woman's external attractiveness demonstrated her value and the possibility of converting it into other goods. "For an unemployed woman, beauty, attractiveness, and cleanliness are part of the decoration of her life. In foreign magazines, you can often read the following adverts: "Beauty is one of your responsibilities. Your youth is your capital" (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1942, p. 26). But the authors also reminded working women of the need to have a flawless appearance: apply light make-up, dress elegantly, and take care to preserve their youth as long as possible. Working women were reminded that their career was not their main area of fulfillment: "...a woman's duty is to please, charm and decorate the world with her grace and beauty" (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1942, p. 27). Here we can talk about imposing the cult of youth on women, focusing on their appearance and using them as a resource that can be profitably invested.

In the period after the end of the Civil War, articles and stories on military topics were especially frequently published in the press. In such journalistic and fictional works, the image of a nurse was one of the embodiments of femininity. "...the door opens and a blonde nurse with a sweet smile appears on the threshold, instantly attracting all eyes. With love and tenderness, she distributes letters to the wounded and tells them about their families. ... A good comrade! Yes, she is an angel... She is the nurse we all dream about." (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1943, p. 30). It was also one of the few professions allowed for women, as it was associated with mercy and care, qualities traditionally considered symbolically female.

#### IV. CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINE IDENTITY AS ANTI-FEMININITY

The man was the absolute authority in the family, and his role was to provide for and protect the family. They were encouraged to participate in public life, military service and economic activity.

An illustration of the formation of an idealized image of hegemonic masculinity can be found in Miguel Primo de Rivera Jr's memoirs of the imprisonment and trial of him, his sister Margarita and brother José Antonio. He recounts his brother's courage, dignity and endurance during the trial. "He felt that he was dying just when his work and his dreams had become a reality, but he accepted death with humility and peace" (Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista, 1939, p. 16-17). Several layers can be traced in the portrayal of José Antonio Primo de Rivera. The narrative of his martyrdom was an important symbolic component of the propaganda myth. It symbolized the fortitude and self-sacrifice of the Phalangist and the devotion to the ideals of service to the Fatherland of a man who devoted himself to Spain. This was the ideal of masculinity in Francoist Spain.

Male dominance in the social, political, and economic spheres was relayed through the symbolic figures of charismatic leaders. In Spain, the central political figure and personification of power in this historical period was the caudillo, Franco. His activities were described in pathetic and

flattering terms, with each event given a symbolic sacramental meaning. The description of one of Franco's trips to Andalusia in the almanac "Vertice" was accompanied by comments about "...the ardent, unanimous and widespread enthusiasm of the population in connection with this visit". The dictator's meetings with representatives of local secular and ecclesiastical authorities, as well as ordinary citizens, were presented as examples of general recognition and unity around his figure as a leader. "... Franco spoke to the people and listened to them - in short, he was the most authentic example of the noblest and humane leadership" (Vertice, 1943, p. 64).

An excerpt from a speech by José Antonio Giron on 4 March 1947, published in the magazine "Consigna", clearly shows the features of philosophical idealism and voluntarism. "On all of life's battlefields, victory belongs to the warrior who, when his sword breaks, fights on in the passion of distance. It is in the storms that a sailor shows his skill and courage, and it is in the rescue of his wrecked ship for further voyages, and not in the contemplative whining about broken rigging, that the measure of his quality as a man lies" (Consigna, 1947, p. 19). In his rhetorical techniques, he used the image of the Great Motherland, which can only be realized through collective discipline, "legions of brave men enlightened by faith", and justice that unites society. The images and qualities that illustrated these hopes were stereotypically masculine, as a symbolic expression of the fact that they were capable of "great deeds and accomplishments".

The paradigm of Phalangism was built on masculine ideals, which were repeatedly demonstrated both in the practices of everyday and political life and in the lexical and semantic fields. In the press affiliated with the FET y de las JONS party structures, one of the leitmotifs of publications was a story about the ideals of the Falangist movement and the principles of their implementation. The Phalangists themselves were portrayed as individuals with high moral standards and developed civic consciousness. They were credited with striving for self-improvement, discipline, sacrifice, asceticism, and devotion. "The most complete and unchanging morality is that of a half monk and half soldier, which means the need to avoid the superfluous, the sinful, and the convenient" (Boletino informativo de la Guardia de Franco, 1943, p. 64).

The educational system of Francoist Spain provided for differentiated gender socialization and separate education by sex. The curriculum included the reproduction of gender stereotypes and the ranking of boys and girls. In the upbringing of boys, the emphasis was on developing qualities that were considered typically masculine, such as discipline, loyalty, and humility. To this end, an important emphasis was placed on physical training, in line with the belief that "...intellectual education will not benefit a body sickened by inactivity or laziness" (Guardiana, 1953, p. 15). Such pedagogical approaches were intended to develop in the boys the determination and perseverance with which they would serve the regime in the future.

## V. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Franco's regime sought to create a strong emotional connection with society by presenting itself as an organic part of it. To this end, it flirted with sensitive themes and symbolic attributes that were supposed to demonstrate its historical continuity, and inseparability from traditions and social perceptions. The use of the press to achieve these goals involved the construction of the concept of the "other", which allowed for a clear definition of the framework of normativity. The construction of gender models served as an instrument of ideological propaganda and support for the authoritarian regime. These models were simplistic, stereotypical and limited the possibilities for individual development.

Femininity was represented through roles related to reproductive function, providing family comfort and preserving cultural traditions. Gender polarisation and patriarchal ideas about the social role of women caused them to be perceived as "different" through the prism of androcentrism. Social expectations of women's passivity in socio-political life were relayed through the press. Particular attention was paid to appearance: the cult of youth and preservation of "unfading beauty" was imposed on women. The idea that women's attractiveness and youth were a tool for obtaining social and material benefits was directly articulated.

Normative masculinity implied a motivation to achieve success and high status in public life. In Spain during this historical period, this identity was heavily influenced by Francoist ideology. Therefore, this discourse was dominated by the images of a warrior, a phalanxist, a leader, a martyr hero. The press conveyed expectations that men should follow the norms of traditional masculinity: a stoic attitude to life's problems, dominance, responsibility, and discipline.

*The example of Franco's regime shows how authoritarian regimes use the social construction of gender to gain leverage over public consciousness and behaviour.*

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- [1] OFER, Inbal. Teresa, ¿revista para todas las mujeres? Género, clase y espacios de la vida cotidiana en el discurso de la Sección Femenina (1960-1970), *Historia y política: Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales*, 37, 2017, 121-146.
- [2] FERNÁNDEZ OSTOS, María Teresa; GONZÁLEZ DUGO, Irene. La revista pedagógica Consigna: la configuración de la imagen de la mujer en la educación posfranquista, *II Congreso Internacional de Comunicación y Género*, Sevilla, 2014, 316-326.
- [3] TESSADA SEPÚLVEDA, Vanessa. El modelo femenino en las dictaduras de Franco y Pinochet a través de las revistas femeninas "Y, revista la mujer" y "Amiga": "Modelando el bello sexo", *Investigaciones históricas: Época moderna y contemporánea*, 32, 2012, 263-282.
- [4] FUENTES RODRÍGUEZ, Catalina. La construcción de la identidad grupal en el discurso ideológico, *Stampa e regimi: studi su Legioni e Falangi/Legiones y Falanges, una Rivista d'Italia e di Spagna*, Italia, 2015, 225-252.
- [5] *Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista*, 57, 10/1942.
- [6] *Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista*, 71, 12/1943.
- [7] MACHO, Victorio. La Madre, *Ayer i hoy*, 46, 3/1955, 3-6.
- [8] *Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista*, 15, 4/1939.
- [9] ANTIGÜEDAD, Alfredo R. La liberación de Miguel Primo de Rivera. *Y: revista para la mujer nacional-sindicalista*, 15, 4/1939, 16-18.
- [10] *Vertice*, 65, 1943.
- [11] *Consigna*, 76, 1/5/1947.
- [12] *Boletín informativo de la Guardia de Franco*, 65, 1943.
- [13] *Guardiana*, 1, 11/1953.