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**SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN *MY STORY*, BY MARILYN MONROE:
WOMEN AND AGENCY IN HOLLYWOOD**

**CAMPINA GRANDE
2022**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso (Artigo) apresentado ao Departamento de Letras e Artes - Curso de Letras Inglês da Universidade Estadual da Paraíba, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de graduação em Letras Inglês.

Área de concentração: Literatura

Orientador: Prof. Me. Giovane Alves de Souza

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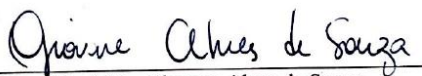
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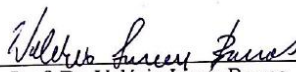
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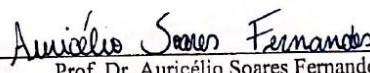
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To Marilyn – in all her complexity.

“In Hollywood a girl’s virtue is much less important than her hair-do. You’re judged by how you look, not by what you are. Hollywood’s a place where they’ll pay you a thousand dollars for a kiss, and fifty cents for your soul. I know, because I turned down the first offer often enough and held out for the fifty cents” (Marilyn Monroe).

LIST OF IMAGES

IMAGE 1 – Red Bathing Suit Entrance..... 29

IMAGE 2 – Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend..... 29

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION	11
2 WOMEN AND AGENCY	12
2.1 Women and agency in literature	13
2.2 Women's writings and writing women	15
2.3 Women on and off-screen	17
2.4 Women and symbolic violence	19
3 METHODOLOGY	21
4 SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN MY STORY, BY MARILYN MONROE	22
5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS	33
REFERENCES	34
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	36

SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN *MY STORY*, BY MARILYN MONROE: WOMEN AND AGENCY IN HOLLYWOOD

Gabrielly Leite Moura¹

ABSTRACT

Although being only one of the many faces of the Golden Age, Marilyn Monroe remains to be one of the most recognizable figures in pop culture and History. As most famous people, Monroe headlined many works throughout innumerable media outlets. The difference, however, relies on the amount of financed productions and, against the test of time, their continuous increase. Of course, one of such outlets was the literary field which, in both the fictional and non-fictional genres, worded much of the 50s icon's life. On the other hand, the downside of this reach came in the form of many unreliable, or outright fallacious, narratives that, at the end of the day, did more harm than good. In such perspective, the present work seeks to bring to light Monroe's words themselves by exploring her only autobiography, entitled *My Story*, interpreting her overall experiences and how they may offer insights on her position as a woman and an actress in the 50s decade. Following a bibliographical study and descriptive approach to guide our qualitative research, we relied on the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1998) from which we extracted the conceptions of our main theory of symbolic violence, as well as texts by Gilbert and Gubar (1979), Branco and Brandão (1989), Laura Mulvey (1988), and other authors who have contributed to the field of gender studies. Thus, we were able to identify and analyze not only the presence of symbolic violence in Monroe's life but also its behavior and adaptation. Such findings enlightened and broadened our perspective on the reach of such violence and its aspects that continue to live on in the unconscious of our current society.

Keywords: Symbolic Violence. Genders. Cinema. Women.

RESUMO

Apesar de ser apenas um dos muitos rostos da Era de Ouro, Marilyn Monroe permanece sendo uma das figuras mais reconhecíveis da cultura pop e da história. Como a maioria dos famosos, Monroe estrelou múltiplos trabalhos através de inúmeros meios de comunicação. A diferença, contudo, está na quantidade de produções financiadas e, persistindo ao teste do tempo, seu contínuo crescimento. Evidentemente, um de tais meios foi o literário, em que, tanto nos gêneros de ficção e não ficção, muito foi escrito sobre vida do ícone dos anos 50. Por outro lado, a desvantagem desse alcance veio na forma de múltiplas narrativas não confiáveis, senão completamente falsas, que, no final das contas, trouxeram mais malefícios que benefícios. Nessa perspectiva, o presente trabalho procura trazer à luz as próprias palavras de Monroe através da exploração de sua única biografia, intitulada *My Story*, interpretando

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suas experiências no geral e como estas podem oferecer olhares acerca de seu lugar como mulher e atriz na década de cinquenta. Seguindo um estudo bibliográfico e abordagem descritiva para guiar nossa pesquisa qualitativa, nós nos fundamentamos no trabalho de Pierre Bourdieu (1998), do qual nós extraímos os conceitos da nossa teoria principal da violência simbólica, assim como os textos de Gilbert e Gubar (1979), Branco e Brandão (1989), Laura Mulvey (1988) e outros autores que contribuíram para o campo dos estudos de gênero. Portanto, fomos capazes de identificar e analisar não só a presença de violência simbólica na vida de Monroe, mas também o comportamento e adaptação desta violência. Tais achados iluminaram e ampliaram nossa perspectiva acerca do alcance de tal violência e seus aspectos que continuam vivendo no inconsciente da nossa atual sociedade.

Palavras-chave: Violência Simbólica. Gêneros. Cinema. Mulheres.

1 INTRODUCTION

Literature's history is intrinsically tied to paradigms of gender inequality. Even with a brief look throughout its history, the favoring of the male perspective can be easily spotted when we reminisce about some of the most famous names of the written art such as William Blake, Percy B. Shelley, and William Shakespeare. Due to this overwhelmingly male gaze upon the feminine, women felt the need to enter and make their own contributions to the literary field, thus offering a less stereotypical view and characterization of themselves. This integration of women within the area was able to revoke its status as exclusively male, although not reaching a point of equality.

This legacy of disproportionate distribution of perspectives carried over to the birth of cinema at the end of the 19th century, with its artistic and systematic values being directly influenced, in regards to the way the industry system was set up to function. This type of functioning not only permitted, but also facilitated, the uneven power dynamic between genders. We are able to attest to this fact by looking at some of the most famous female movie stars of Hollywood's Golden Age – such as Jean Harlow, Judy Garland, Rita Hayworth, Marilyn Monroe etc. – who had to lose or abdicate so much in order to be able to pursue their careers. Sadly, this cycle of mistreatment is not difficult to be identified due to its perpetuation through the symbolic channels of power that were systematically solidified as pillars of the industry.

In this light, the present work chose to focus solely on Marilyn Monroe, who unfortunately remains to be one of the clearest examples of the struggles one faces once within the system. Although not an exception – in actuality being part of a twisted pattern –, the unprecedented status her fame achieved was a direct influence to the tenfold amplification of these circumstances. After Monroe's passing, her once considerably limited agency faded into an almost complete disregard for her narrative. As a consequence of her ever so marketable image, Monroe became an ideal subject for literary works, however, many of such works manifested their purpose and quality by showing interest in her – and her persona – as a topic insofar as a recognizable name, not daring or wanting to uphold a more vast and genuine investigation into her inner world. When it comes to the market of her biographies specifically, we were able to see literature's tendency to prioritize male perspectives in the considerable number of books written – and, consequently, sold – about Monroe's life penned by men, offering her image majorly from a reductionist, dehumanizing point of view.

In this sense, the present work focuses on Marilyn Monroe's 1974 autobiography *My Story*, written with the help of novelist Ben Hecht, as a way to try and analyze her story as told by her, seeing as it speaks to many of the core points of being a woman in the film industry, from the perspective of someone who thoroughly lived it. To accomplish such an objective, we will use Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence, which seeks to explain how this specific type of violence, that is exerted through imperceptible channels, influences the power dynamic of the genders. Bourdieu (1998) further explains that the existence of such symbolic domination is created and perpetuated through the naturalization of cultural arbitrariness, the "transformation of history into nature" (BORDIEU, 1998, p. 2).

Thus, in a system built upon the prospects of inequality, the film industry, more specifically Hollywood, reinforces this disparity of power making it so that this subtle symbolic structure becomes more noticeable – due to its quantifiable data and the art of filmmaking itself. This theory by French Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu can be found in his 1998 book entitled *Masculine Domination*, which tackles with more depth the subject of power dynamics and their functioning within society.

The present work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter will focus on women's agency, beginning with how women were represented within the literary field, wherein we will use the work of Gilbert and Gubar (1979). In the same light, we will then further discuss

how women were written and enter on the subject of how it differs from how they themselves write, and to assist us in this part we will use the work of Branco and Brandão (1989). We will then enter the topic of the disposition of women's agency in the United States and, consequently, in Hollywood itself, with the aid of the works by Friedan (1963) and Basinger (1993). Furthermore, the chapter will tackle the subject of women's agency in regards to symbolic violence as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1998).

The second chapter will solely focus on the analysis of Marilyn Monroe's autobiography *My Story*, using Bourdieu's (1998) theory of symbolic violence as main framework so as to identify its instances during her telling of her story, as well as other scholars of the field of gender studies such as Beauvoir (1949) and Friedan (1963) so as to reflect on the concepts of the feminine, womanhood, and femininity, and how they were an influence – be it cause or consequence – in Monroe's life and career.

2 WOMEN AND AGENCY

To begin a conversation about the agency of women, we must first understand what agency means, what it encompasses and entails. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines agency "as the capacity, condition, or state of acting or of exerting power" (MERRIAM WEBSTER, n.d). Considering this definition, one of the biggest difficulties when seeking agency comes not from the capacity to exert power, but from the unavailable conditions to do so. The conditions for any degree of agency to exist are dictated by many sets of arbitrary rules, be they direct or subtle, making the distribution of power unequal and unjust. These rules are adapted according to each field to abide by their specifications, and, in this sense, so will the conditions for the existence of agency.

The minutiae of this arbitrariness responsible for imposing the hardships and shaping the goals of the agency pursuit will always differ—for example, its adaptability can be observed by comparing its behavior in the working field to that in the household. Considering the patriarchal organization of society itself, women are expected to face more hardships in general, but once trying to succeed in a male-dominated field, the challenges pose themselves with more regularity and increased difficulties, therefore, the need for agency is made even more necessary.

Bourdieu (1998) points out that the symbolic channels through which the subtleties of these organizations are made present are a key point of the masculine domination that is an effect of symbolic violence. In this sense, we are able to understand how the conditions for the exertion of agency are influenced by, both directly and indirectly, male-defined structures. The author further mentions that this type of domination is a gentle one, becoming imperceptible even to its victims, thus offering an entryway door for us to understand how the idea that these structures do not receive sexist contributions is continuously projected.

This thought may be even more common surrounding the creative fields which, more commonly than we would like to admit, have the avant-garde façade serve as a type of smoke-curtain for the harmful characteristics that are the same as in any other male-dominated areas. That is to say that the artistic field is not exempt from societal rules and customs as it sometimes seems to be, and these circumstances do encompass the specifications – subdivisions, one may say – of the field.

In this sense, the distinction between the agency sought after and acquired by the women within the literary space and those in the film industry does exist and is relevant to point out. The homogeneity of the hardships they face is as much an illusion as the idea that we have reached a point of equality. Therefore, we will discuss hereafter the intricacies of female agency according to the dynamics of each field.

2.1 Women and agency in literature

Gerard Manley Hopkins, today considered one of the greatest poets of the Victorian era, thought of the pen as an analogy to male sexuality, more specifically a representation of the penis. His conception is laid out in the opening lines of the first chapter of Gilbert & Gubar's 1979 book *The Madwoman in The Attic*. The chapter entitled *The Queen's Looking Glass: Female Creativity, Male Images of Women, and the Metaphor of Literary Paternity* expands on this theory of male authorship mirroring male sexuality and paternity.

Not being exclusive to Victorian literature, this conception that the pen, as a phallic object, represents more than what its literal meaning might reduce it to be, can be observed throughout most of Western literature. Going back to the very etymology of the word "author" and its correlation with multiple meanings – from authority to increaser and founder –, Gilbert and Gubar (2000) point out that, besides Hopkins, many other literary theoreticians have contributed to the theory of the paternity of authorship.

Defining poetry as a mirror held up to nature, the mimetic aesthetic that begins with Aristotle and descends through Sidney, Shakespeare, and Johnson implies that the poet, like a lesser God, has made or engendered an alternative, mirror-universe in which he actually seems to enclose or trap shadows of reality (GILBERT and GUBAR, 2000, p. 5).

It is thus easier to understand how this thought came to present itself as one of the difficulties when it came to women entering the literary field. Seeing their works as their creation that, in some capacity, came to life once materialized in the paper, the idea of women as creators, also as lesser gods, was not welcome. Women, in their ever so shallow existence, belonged on the page; the object, not its owner. The unchangeable presence of the muse.

The assumed masculine essence of authorship and its consequent perpetuation by male authors stems also from viewing the pen as a counterpart to the previous common representation of male power, the sword. Although both being phallic objects that carry similar analogies for the most part, the pen, with its power of creation, associates closer with fatherhood than the sword, an artifact of destruction and action, which is more closely associated with male virility. However, with the increase of literacy and the cultural custom of bloodline and surname perpetuation, the power of the pen became mightier than that of its predecessor and even "in patriarchy more resonantly sexual" (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 6). Now the pen gathered both sides of the analogy; the sexual implications that once were solely reserved to the sword, and the power of creation, of "fathering" its writings. Thus, giving authors even more prospects of ownership towards their literary texts.

For if the author/father is owner of his text and of his reader's attention, he is also, of course, owner/possessor of the subjects of his text, that is to say of those figures, scenes, and events – those brain children – he has both incarnated in black and white and "bound" in cloth or leather. Thus, because he is an author, a "man of letters" is simultaneously, like his divine counterpart, a father, a master or ruler, and an owner: the spiritual type of a patriarch, as we understand that term in Western society (GILBERT and GUBAR, 2000, p. 7).

With more rationalized certainty of the rightfulness of their place in such a special field, one that made them distinct, male authors thought it even more presumptuous for women to attempt the pen. If then it was not right, now it was unnatural. For it was not a female characteristic, as told "in a famous letter to Charlotte Bronte" where "Robert Southey rephrased the same notion: 'Literature is not the business of a woman's life, and it cannot be'" (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 8).

This idea, of course, was much sustained by the metaphor of literary paternity, with authors going as far as to develop other theories based on gender to uphold their arguments. Such theories argued that some women could mimic or come close to the talent of male writers. Nonetheless, in the cases where such anomalies would occur, they were the exception, not the rule. Some believed that few women did have talent; however, when this happened to be the case, it was unbecoming, for it meant that that woman had a male characteristic that rendered her "unfeminine".

Women were then, for a time, relegated to the role of the muse; always on the page, never writing it. Thenceforth, continued the stereotypes. From each author came a different definition not only of women themselves but also of what they thought to be female perfection and corruption, female sexuality or lack of it, what composed their beauty and ugliness, what made them desirable or unwanted, and who they thought women were and were supposed to be.

From Eve, Minerva, Sophia, and Galatea onward, after all, patriarchal mythology defines women as created by, from, and for men, the children of male brains, ribs, and ingenuity. For Blake the eternal female was at her best an Emanation of the male creative principle. For Shelley she was an epi-psyche, a soul out of the poet's soul, whose inception paralleled on a spiritual plane the solid births of Eve and Minerva. Throughout the history of Western culture, moreover, male-engendered female figures as superficially disparate as Milton's Sin, Swift's Chloe, and Yeats's Crazy Jane have incarnated men's ambivalence not only toward female sexuality but toward their own (male) physicality (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 12).

By creating women, fathering them, and owning them, the author reserves for them only the space of object, even if they are their subject. Because if a subject is objectified enough, they become inanimate, having no needs, no wants, and no voice. As a being that possesses no life, it cannot die. Forever still, with its immortality given through art, it does not decay, it remains immutable. However, the paradox surrounding this condition is that, if it has not lived, the author lacks his power of creation; if it has, the author, as a father and creator, has killed it. By presenting his muse with the gift of immortality, the author is depriving them of life itself, for "he stills them, or – embedding them in the marble of his art – kills them" (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 14).

Their unaltering muses for long composed most of the niche where women were found in the literary field. Unsatisfied and imprisoned, women looked in the mirror searching for their male-described counterparts only to find nothing but their true reflection, that of a woman that did exist, but only in the real world. An unquietness derived from the realization that for women, in their full complexity, to exist on the page, female writers themselves would have to fight for and find their place on the field. However, starting to break free of the imposed molds was not an easy task.

For all literary artists, of course, self-definition necessarily precedes self-assertion: the creative "I AM" cannot be uttered if the "I" knows not what it is. But for the female artist the essential process of self definition is complicated by all those patriarchal definitions that intervene between herself and herself (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 17).

So female writers had the continuous task of self-discovery, of exploring not only who they were as individuals but also who they were as women. Needless to say, this journey's beginning – for it is not finished – was challenging for many reasons, one of them being due to the external definitions the female self had had for a long time. Thus, women's processes of self-discovery was both influenced by their writing and influenced what they wrote – which can be seen when taking a closer look at female narratives on and off the page.

2.2 Women's writings and writing women

Breaking free of their imposed molds, women began to abandon their places as still muses on the artistic marble and come to life. This new state of living subjects began to appear on the page when, in their own lives, they began to assume the role of the author. It is not possible to dissociate women's journey of self-discovery from their narratives because for many of them this process actively occurred through their writing. The materialization of their words onto the page meant that they were no longer vocalizing their tales to the silent void of the mirror.

Their writings, however, were only beginning to distance themselves from all the exterior influence that came from male voices, as were the writers themselves. Due to the previous extensive and continuous definitions of who they were, many early works of female precursors of the literary field have clear, direct and indirect influences of once established stereotypes. This is not to say that when this was the case, these writers were without merit in their work, on the contrary, it only goes to show how deeply these patriarchal views were rooted. Looking back at such works and noticing these almost inevitable aspects that show how much the absence of a sisterhood was profoundly felt, and highlight how such circumstances added even more weight to the already existing pressures on female writers.

[...] the loneliness of the female artist, her feelings of alienation from male predecessors coupled with her need for sisterly precursors and successors, her urgent sense of her need for a female audience together with her fear of the antagonism of male readers, her culturally conditioned timidity about self-dramatization, her dread of the patriarchal authority of art, her anxiety about the impropriety of female invention – all these phenomena of "inferiorization" mark the woman writer's struggle for artistic self-definition and differentiate her efforts at self-creation from those of her male counterpart (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 50).

It was thus a lonely process, the one of self-discovery, and although not intimidating enough that women would not pursue it, it generated an anxiety of authorship. As described by Gilbert and Gubar (2000), the term and theory originated by Harold Bloom refers to a fear that derived from the dread of the influence of male precursors. Also receiving the denomination of "anxiety of influence", this fear of lack of originality or creativity was not exclusive to women, in fact this female perspective was added by Gilbert and Gubar (2000) as a way to bring such discussion to women's anxieties for they were distinct in the way they were felt and the consequences they brought. This specific failure, of not having your own voice, was expected of women for, as previously mentioned, it was considered not in their nature to be creative beings.

The possibility to overcome such anxiety had to come from self-assurance, from knowing when the male precursor's voice ended and theirs appeared. However, deciding to stand by their work essentially implied a rebellion against the whole system that said it was not proper nor possible for women to occupy the positions they wanted in such a prestigious field. At the end of the day, the choices female writers had to consider were haunted by a paradox:

[...] the literary woman has always faced equally degrading options when she had to define her public presence in the world. If she did not suppress her work entirely or publish it pseudonymously or anonymously, she could modestly confess her female "limitations" and concentrate on the "lesser" subjects reserved for ladies as becoming to their inferior powers. If the latter alternative seemed an admission of failure, she could rebel, accepting the ostracism that must have seemed inevitable (GILBERT & GUBAR, 2000, p. 64).

Thus, the divergence between the “anxiety of authorship” experienced by male and female writers becomes even clearer. Whilst men had the fear of forever standing in the shadow of their forefathers, women had self-doubt and fear of scrutiny. The first regarding their voice and the possibility that it could not be completely sincere for their own ideas were influenced by male narratives that defined them for so long. The second regarding the reception of their work by a long male-indoctrinated audience. For those who chose to rebel and write according to their own rules, their writings revealed many aspects of women’s writing styles, preferred subjects and artistic choices.

Nevertheless, to achieve this point of extended dissociation from male writings, they had the difficult task of not only finding their voice as writers but also, and primarily, as women. A key point was, also, to understand women in plural, to avoid a complete alienation from their female audience that, as they once did, longed for their complexity on the page. So, trying to be seen by none other than themselves, in their non-standardized narratives they accomplished the opposite of what their male counterparts had; instead of stripping their subjects of life, they presented them with it.

When women were featured in their own texts, they had distinguished characteristics, more complex ones, one may say, for they had the agency to be more than a one dimensional being constituted only by one side of the spectrum of humanity. In actuality, many women-subjects of female narratives were extremely ambiguous and encompassed traits that, according to male critics of the time, did not belong together for they were almost complete opposites, yet for many others this was exactly what made the texts stand out in their own nuances.

What fascinates me, however, is the strange capacity of joining the most profound intimacy of autoerotic emotion to the complete fusion of eroticism and love, in a trajectory that goes from intoxicating pleasure with the body itself to the erotic ecstasy of the fusion with the cosmos. All of this seems to be intimately related to the aspect of female sexuality – still not very clear to all of us – and its interconnections with maternity, with this obscure maternal womb of which we have so little news (BRANCO & BRANDÃO, 1989, p. 105).²

This tendency to explore new themes with freedom or old ones with additional complexities became familiar in female narratives. With the necessity of finding one’s voice, women’s writings kept diving into the inner world of the self. Erotism, religion, spirituality, maternity, fraternity, and so many other topics gained new subtleties that came with these different points of view. In addition, there were also new ways for them to be explored – in comparison, contrast, alignment, conjunction, together, apart, in small groups, altogether, etc. – but always incredibly internalized and intimate.

From texts written through streams of consciousness such as Virginia Woolf’s works *To the Lighthouse* and *A Room of One’s Own*, to narratives of coming of age such as Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women*, women’s writings encompassed female characteristics to the point of them being embodied by the text itself. Not only was their subject alive, but their words themselves carried life within every letter. As pointed out by Branco and Brandão (1989), these female narratives had the tendency to try to say the unspeakable, to explain the unexplainable. It was common for women’s writings to have marks of oral discourse – like a tale told by a grandma –, the punctuation was not frequently

² “O que me fascina, entretanto, é a estranha capacidade de aliar o mais profundo intimismo da emoção autoerótica a total de fusão do erotismo e do amor, numa trajetória que vai do prazer inebriante com o próprio corpo ao êxtase erótico da fusão com cosmos. Tudo isso me parece estar intimamente relacionado ao aspecto da sexualidade feminina – tão pouco claro ainda para todos nós – e suas interligações com a maternidade, com esse obscuro útero materno do qual temos tão pouca notícia” (BRANCO & BRANDÃO, 1989, p. 105 – OBS.: todas as traduções para a Língua Inglesa são de minha autoria).

used in its common manner, and the texts rarely attained themselves to the specifications of a correct grammar.

These technical characteristics could sometimes render the text difficult to be comprehended by an audience so familiarized with male writings. Nevertheless, these aspects never compromised the quality of the final product for, as said by scholars of the field, the stories told by women were to be felt, not understood. As something that, in all aspects, could be rendered alive, female narratives, as brilliantly put by Branco and Brandão (1989), were more composed of ramblings, screams, and images than of words per se. As another detail brought them closer and linked such texts with oral traditions, the narratives themselves were deemed pre-writing or pre-discourse. Altogether, the characteristics mentioned above were, and still are, very defining of women's writings. This is not to imply, however, that they limited female texts, that all their works had to abide by such specifications to be considered "female narratives". These are aspects that were found present in such texts for they spoke directly to women off the page and how they dealt with all that meant to be a woman of that time.

In the same vein, with the birth of cinema at the end of the 19th century, a similar conversation was about to be held through the black and white contrast of the screen. Unfortunately, especially for women, the beginning of such conversation would bear uncanny resemblance to the one that happened in that same century but in a different field. The patriarchal foundations that marked the literary world would too be upheld by the cinematic industry since its very beginning, thus foreshadowing some of the challenges to come.

2.3 Women on and off-screen

At the beginning of the 1900s, the film industry was developing at an incredible rate, and by 1914 major studios were already established. Eventually, by the end of the 1920s, Hollywood entered what is now considered and called its Golden Age. This period was, however, marked by both the Great Depression³ and World War II. New genres, new stars and a new audience were all affected by the magnitude of such events. These new characteristics that were encompassed by the industry did not substitute the ones carried over from other older artistic fields – the literary one being one of them. Its functioning relied much on the already established societal norms. Thence on, women that wished to be a part of such industry would have, as female writers before them, to contemplate all adversity that came their way.

Although known as the Golden Age, this period was not as shining gold for women as it was for men. It is true that within the cinematic field women had a bigger branch of spaces that they could occupy – besides writers they could be directors, actors, producers, managers, etc. – but that does not mean they did reach these places with the same facility or equality as men did. In fact, an article written by Jack Malvern and published by *The Times* points out that after the "Big Eight" – term that refers to the major studios at the time⁴ – took control of the industry, and women's presence in all positions decreased. "In 1922 about 22 percent of screenwriters were women, a peak that has never been surpassed, about 10 percent of producers were women and 3 percent directors" (MALVERN, 2020).

Once the studios were established, the disparity they brought expanded, from their casting system to their patrons, it became clear who had the upper hand and whose narratives

³ "Great Depression, worldwide economic downturn that began in 1929 and lasted until about 1939. It was the longest and most severe depression ever experienced by the industrialized Western world, sparking fundamental changes in economic institutions, macroeconomic policy, and economic theory" (PELLS, 2022).

⁴ The major studios in question were "20th Century Fox, Columbia Pictures, MGM, Paramount Pictures, RKO Radio Pictures, United Artists, Universal Studios and Warner Bros." (BLAKEMORE, 2018). Such division can also be referred as "The Big Five and The Little Three".

they were interested in showing. With this overwhelmingly male presence within the field, many of the productions of the time relied on male perspectives. When it was the case for a female narrative to be told, even as the center of the story, she was still at the mercy of the stereotypes of her time. Jeanine Basinger explores in great detail the characteristics of female characters and what she calls “woman’s film” in her 1993 book entitled *A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930-1960*. The author explains:

The function of the woman's film was to articulate female concerns, angers, and desires, to give substance to a woman's dreams and a woman's problems. This, as has been established, meant putting a strong woman at the center of things in order to carry the plot. Thus, it was easiest to label stereotyping of women through describing the secondary characters or by studying movies that presented multiple females in the plot rather than one dominant female character. This stereotyping was almost always linked to sex, to the woman's biological function, or to how she looked physically (BASINGER, 1993, p. 36-37).

Through Basinger’s (1993) words it is easier to understand how such stereotypes present in the movies were supposed to resemble what they considered improper in women’s personality and behavior off the screen. The women on screen would act as surrogates to the ones in the audience, making it possible for them to see their ideas or desires acted out in the film’s narrative, and allowing them to contemplate its possible outcomes once followed through. This is why female archetypes that did not convey sexist ideals, such as the *Femme Fatale*⁵, would traditionally have two degrading options at the end of the movie: they could repent and change or die. This was due to the ulterior motive behind the presence of such challenging characters in mainstream films, they conferred a way for studios to show that such heinous behaviors coming from women would not be acceptable, culturally or in the eyes of the law.

The idea of not complying with the societal norms of the time had to have consequences, both on the screen and off. This idea was especially reinforced after the Hays Code⁶ was adopted, adding to the pressures and demands movies received according to their featured contents. Thus, even when it came to more ambiguous and complex characters, as the *Femme Fatale* herself, the presence of women on screen still relied much on their previous status as the muse, and taking into account that the act of looking is a pleasure in itself, the films’ muses held the paradoxical position of being alive but living as an object. This condition is made possible even in what Basinger (1993) called “woman’s films”, because although such movies featured women as their focal point, their stories were still written, produced, and directed by men. Laura Mulvey, in her 1988 essay entitled *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, pointed out the hovering presence of what she called “the male gaze”.

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy [sic~] on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to striptease, from Ziegfeld to Busby Berkeley, she

⁵ The French phrase ‘Femme Fatale’ translates to ‘fatal woman,’ and describes an archetype that originates from the classic film noir of the 1940s and 50s. This stock character usually brings about the destruction of the protagonist, usually male, and manages to reject traditional ideals of femininity while she does it (KHAMBAY, 2021).

⁶ The Hays Code was this self-imposed industry set of guidelines for all the motion pictures that were released between 1934 and 1968,” says O’Brien. “The code prohibited profanity, suggestive nudity, graphic or realistic violence, sexual persuasions and rape. It had rules around the use of crime, costume, dance, religion, national sentiment and morality (LEWIS, 2021).

holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative (MULVEY, 1988, p. 62).

The constant company of the male gaze in movies was proof that the absence of female voices in the telling of such stories was deeply noticed, especially after women had had the opportunity to come in contact with complex and nuanced versions of themselves on the pages of books. For them to come back to the stillness of the muse when it came to the majority of their screen versions was underwhelming and suffocating. In 1963, activist Betty Friedan wrote about the influence that the media had on the collective imagination of American women and the part it played on the birth of what she called “the feminine mystique”, a term that became the title of her book.

The “feminine mystique”, as conceptualized by Friedan (1963), embodied an indescribable anguish born from inexplicable feelings of unhappiness and alienation felt by women of the time. The author debates the participation of the media, and movies themselves, in the cultivation of such feelings. The agony that came with the sense of being ungrateful or abnormal for not finding the happiness the women on screen found when put under the same circumstances created a type of loneliness. The thought that they were alone in their unfulfillment hardly made them resent the women that were supposed to represent them in black and white, but instead created a resentment toward themselves for not being as their counterparts were. Ultimately, the archetypes they saw on the screen aggravated the pressure they already were put under by society itself.

And so, it can be understood that the film industry and its productions played a large hand in the already present subjugation of women in society. Besides the clear gender disparity outside the silver screen, the decision to use women to oppress each other and, therefore, hate none other but themselves had and still has clearly observable outcomes. The subtlety that was so well used by power systems in place was not indifferent to the film industry, in fact it solidified itself as one of its pillars.

2.4 Women and symbolic violence

The dichotomies between genders that were found both in the literary field and the cinematic industry were a symptom of the systematic oppression that was in place. Such power dynamics were so normalized that anything that dared to challenge it was deemed unnatural. Of course, the same dynamic was found in society and stretched itself from workplaces to households, and although making itself clear at times, many of its aspects almost went by unnoticed, while some managed to hide themselves completely. This blind perpetuation could also come, and often came, from the dominated themselves, for they would “apply categories constructed from the point of view of the dominant to the relations of domination, thus making them appear as natural” (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 35). This situation was prone to happen due to the navigation of oppression through symbolic channels that were often imperceptible. French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu named this occurrence “symbolic violence” on his 1998 book entitled *Masculine Domination* and explained:

The effect of symbolic domination (whether ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousnesses but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the level of the decisions of consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 37).

Thus, the author makes clear that the imperception of domination is not due to its lack of consequences or a limited extent of its exertion. The difficulty of its recognition through cognitive conscience is due to the arbitrariness of such oppression posing itself as natural and,

therefore, nature itself. The intricate aspect when it comes to symbolic domination is that it is imposed by the dominated as much as by the dominant. People that are oppressed by such circumstances tend to reproduce and reinforce its patterns because of its subtleness. Bourdieu (1998) debates that in order for these relations between dominated and dominant to appear natural to those involved, the schemes applied by the oppressed “are the product of the embodiment of the – thereby naturalized – classifications of which” their “social being is the product” (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 35).

According to the author, symbolic violence, and its characteristics cited above, are not exclusive to gender. The power relation established between dominated and dominant can occur in relation to race, culture, monetary power, and etc. However, many of the circumstances that are thrust upon the oppressed are similar, regardless of the group’s specifications. This is due to the nature of the problem being the same; the subtlety of such violence and its imperceptiveness, both of which tend to alienate those who find themselves in the unfavorable position. On the other hand, when it comes to the circumstances that do differ from each other, the type of symbolic violence that is specific to women’s conditions is called by Bourdieu (1998) “masculine domination”. The thought process that guides such relations comes from very early notions of gender dynamics.

The principle of the inferiority and exclusion of women, which the mythico-ritual system ratifies and amplifies, to the point of making it the principle of division of the whole universe, is nothing other than the fundamental dissymmetry, that of subject and object, agent and instrument, which is set up between men and women in the domain of symbolic exchanges [...] (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 42).

This notion expressed by Bourdieu (1998) directly speaks with Simone de Beauvoir’s theory of “The Other”, laid out in her 1949 book entitled *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir (1949) explains that men seeing themselves as subjects and women as objects, thus reinforcing the already existing dissymmetry, is the principle that guides the concept of The Other. Beauvoir (1949) writes that “insofar as woman is considered the absolute Other, that is—whatever magic powers she has—as the inessential, it is precisely impossible to regard her as another subject” (BEAUVOIR, 1949, p. 105).

Not only is men’s unaltering place in the position of the subject clearly observable throughout History, but women’s constant exclusion from such roles is a direct consequence of this conscious sidelining. The lack of participation women had in the literary field – on and off the page – and in the cinematic industry – on and off the screen – was a problem that influenced and was influenced by society itself. The cyclical movement of inspiration and imitation that connects art and life permitted patriarchy’s power structures to assume a position of omnipotence and omnipresence. This was reinforced by the fact that women “never constituted a separate group that posited itself for-itself before a male group; they have never had a direct or autonomous relationship with men” (BEAUVOIR, 1949, p. 105).

Thus, even though Bourdieu (1998) does not address concepts of gender in detail – focusing mainly on power relations – we can see how his theory converses eloquently with Beauvoir’s (1949), for the effects of masculine domination, identified as a specific type of symbolic violence, are directly linked with the concepts of gender that have for long been upheld by society. Therefore, for masculine domination to exist, the concepts of masculine and feminine had to have been established before they could be studied and their relations with them. With this understanding, we can further comprehend not only the basis of power dynamics as laid out by Bourdieu (1998), but specifically and specially how they behave when it comes to men and women.

While going into detail about his theory, Bourdieu (1998) also suggests a possible way to break away from the oppressive imposed molds. Arguing that for the beginning of such change to happen, there has to be a shift in people’s perceptions, from the dominated to the

dominant, of others and of themselves. Only through a critical observation and judgment of their positions will individuals start to recognize symbolic violence through their cognitive consciousness, and from this recognition they will be able to acquire agency.

Because the foundation of symbolic violence lies not in mystified consciousnesses that only need to be enlightened but in dispositions attuned to the structure of domination of which they are the product, the relation of complicity that the victims of symbolic domination grant to the dominant can only be broken through a radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 41-42).

In this sense, it is of extreme importance to have knowledge of such power structures as well as their means of operation. By contrasting characteristics of specific time periods to observe its differences and unfortunate similarities, we can have a clearer perspective of the extent of these systems. This is one of the reasons why bringing to light such characteristics and contrasting their behavior when functioning in different societies, as well as the ways in which they are able to seamlessly adapt, carries such relevance to each and every individual, especially those who are on the search for their agency.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present work followed a qualitative line of research seeing as its core points – the broader viewing and deeper understanding of human behavior – are encompassed by such methodology, as it is concerned with “aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, focusing on the comprehension and explanation of the dynamics of social relations⁷” (SILVEIRA & CÓRDOVA, 2009, p. 32). To accomplish such goals, however, researchers have to distance themselves from laws that tend to generalize the human experience and abdicate previous notions and judgements that may compromise the research for, as Goldenberg (2004) explains, it “is a neutral and objective activity⁸” (p. 17).

In such regards, we sought to follow a descriptive approach on our research, seeing as this type of perspective, as put by Gil (2002), “has as its primary objective the description of the characteristics of a given population or phenomenon or, then, the establishment of relationships between variables⁹” (p. 42). Thus, considering the alignment of our subject with such considerations, we constructed a text of descriptive-interpretative nature that analyzed *My Story* by combining the theoretical contributions with our own interpretations, taking into account time periods, fields’ specifications and context in general.

To compose our text, we resorted first to a bibliographical study, a process that, according to Gil (2002), relies “on already elaborated materials, constituted mainly of books and scientific articles¹⁰” (p. 44), from which the analyzed data was collected. This bibliographical gathering can be “understood as an exploratory study, since it aims to provide familiarity of the student with the area of study in which they are interested in, as well as its delimitation¹¹” (GIL, 2002, p. 61). From this process, we were able to delimit the scope of our research, define its area, its main question and its problematization.

⁷ “[...] com aspectos da realidade que não podem ser quantificados, centrando-se na compreensão e explicação da dinâmica das relações sociais” (SILVEIRA & CÓRDOVA, 2009, p. 32).

⁸ “[...] uma atividade neutra e objetiva” (GOLDENBERG, 2004, p. 17).

⁹ “[...] têm como objetivo primordial a descrição das características de determinada população ou fenômeno ou, então, o estabelecimento de relações entre variáveis” (GIL, 2002, p. 42).

¹⁰ “[...] em material já elaborado, constituído principalmente de livros e artigos científicos” (GIL, 2002, p. 44).

¹¹ “entendido como um estudo exploratório, posto que tem a finalidade de proporcionar a familiaridade do aluno com a área de estudo no qual está interessado, bem como sua delimitação (GIL, 2002, p. 61).

To construct the *corpus* of our paper, we read and interpreted Marilyn Monroe's 1974 autobiography taking into account the complexities of her being and her experiences. The contemplation of power relations, societal conventions and gender dynamics present in her narrative guided us to rely more extensively on Pierre Bourdieu's 1998 book *Masculine Domination* for it provided us with the main theory used in our analysis. As it was vital to "comprehend the individual's life within the society in which they live"¹² (GOLDENBERG, 2004, p. 21) the subtlety that characterizes Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence was a key point to grasp more deeply the nuances that accompanied the context of specific happenings and circumstances told by Monroe.

It was important to note, however, that due to the genre of our literary subject, its content was directly linked with its author. In this sense, it was made even more necessary for us to convey our interpretations in a clear critical way for, as said by Durão (2020), such writings "are only converted into research when to them is added a reflexive character, a text that transforms the carried out practice into question"¹³ (p. 37). Thus, the objectivity of our elucidations was closely linked with the contributions chosen for our theoretical framework so that both the work and the author could be respected throughout the entirety of the analysis.

4 SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE IN *MY STORY*, BY MARILYN MONROE

My Story is a 1974 autobiography of Marilyn Monroe, written with the help of her friend and novelist Ben Hecht. The book is the only biography, among the overwhelmingly amount of them on the market, that has Monroe's contribution and overall involvement. However, the narrative presented on the pages does not cover the entirety of her life, for the story stops at the height of her career. The book follows young Norma Jeane from her early childhood as an orphan, through her years in pursuit of her Hollywoodian dream, and the ups and downs of a career that helped to define an entire decade. Though in our research we seek to provide space for Monroe's own voice, it is important to note the paradox at play, for our intent to perceive her as a complex subject could only happen by approaching her – and most of what she entailed, for one cannot imply to know her *all* – as an object of study.

The book also makes it possible for us to observe Monroe's exposure to symbolic violence both before and after the accomplishment of her goals. The presence of concepts that constitute Bourdieu's (1998) theory found in the narrative and on the actress' life is not uncommon, especially if we take into account that, according to the French sociologist himself, this type of violence is not only part of society but became one of its most prominent constants. It is, thus, easier to understand how the oppression caused by the violence's grasps could be found in Monroe's life when she was just an ordinary woman and went on when she was one of the biggest icons of the United States.

The consequences of the perpetuation of symbolic violence – and its specifications – through society can be seen in Monroe's life from the very early age of eight. She recalls and describes her sexual assault by a guest of one of the houses she was staying as a young orphan, he was named Kimmel. What disturbs us even further is the response of her caretakers at the time:

When he unlocked the door and let me out, I ran to tell my "aunt" what Mr. Kimmel had done.
"I want to tell you something," I stammered, "about Mr. Kimmel. He– He–" My aunt interrupted.

¹² "[...] compreender a vida do indivíduo dentro da própria sociedade em que vive (GOLDENBERG, 2004, p. 21).

¹³ "[...] só se convertem em pesquisa quando a elas é acrescentado um caráter reflexivo, um texto que transforme em questão a prática realizada" (DURÃO, 2020, p. 37).

“Don’t you dare say anything against Mr. Kimmel,” she said angrily. “Mr. Kimmel’s a fine man. He’s my star boarder!”

Mr. Kimmel came out of his room and stood in the doorway, smiling.

“Shame on you!” my “aunt” glared at me, “complaining about people!”

“This is different,” I began, “this is something I have to tell. Mr. Kimmel—”

I started stammering again and couldn’t finish. Mr. Kimmel came up to me and handed me a nickel.

“Go buy yourself some ice cream,” he said.

I threw the nickel in Mr. Kimmel’s face and ran out (MONROE, 2007, p. 18).

Her harrowing testimony exemplifies how her credibility as a child and a young girl is surpassed by that of the adult man. This imbalanced relation is caused by what Bourdieu (1998) calls *symbolic capital*, a condition that encompasses resources such as honor, prestige, and recognition in order to establish its status; that of someone who has a *symbolic value* in the eyes of society. This value guarantees a type of upper hand that can show its value in numerous societal situations, one of them being the one testified above. Mr. Kimmel’s social capital – the money he provided the family who owned the pension – put the status of his credibility above the one held by Monroe, to the extent that her “aunt” refused even to listen to her plea. Compared to Mr. Kimmel, the few dollars she provided through the estate that financed her staying at the house, was too trifling, and she herself, expendable.

The situation was also embedded with fully formed androcentric views that, once more, worked in favor of Mr. Kimmel, for not only is he the male in the situation, but also the adult. His twisted views on the matter are also a testimony to the deep grasp symbolic violence has on the individual, to the point that leads one to rationalize and normalize the perversity of such an act. Monroe mentions his beliefs when elucidating her going to a religious revival with her family, to which Mr. Kimmel was also invited, and her urge when the evangelist of the event called upon all sinners present to rush to the altar and ask God for forgiveness. Norma Jeane, in her full eight-year-old belief that she was the sinner in the situation, was the first to come up to the altar:

I fell on my knees and began to tell about Mr. Kimmel and how he had molested me in his room. But other “sinners” crowded around me. They also fell on their knees and started wailing about their sins and drowned me out.

I looked back and saw Mr. Kimmel standing among the nonsinners, praying loudly and devoutly for God to forgive the sins of others (MONROE, 2007, p. 18-19).

Mr. Kimmel’s response and Monroe’s guilt were both touched by a cultural tendency to naturalize arbitrariness, one that allows symbolic violence to maintain its subtlety, specially in a case where sexual and physical violence are the more pronounced abuses. Bourdieu (1998) clarifies that in “(t)aking ‘symbolic’ in one of its commonest senses, people sometimes assume that to emphasize symbolic violence is to minimize the role of physical violence” or “to seek to exculpate men from that form of violence – which is obviously not the case” (p. 34). Particularly the contrary, the presence of such violence in the situation only highlights how deeply rooted, to the extent of being part of our unconscious, these conceptions find themselves.

This dissymmetry between genders is very characteristic of masculine domination, a specific type of symbolic violence that regards the power relations between men and women. One of the biggest struggles that accompanies such domination is its plurality in exertion, that extends from language to physique. The latter is, however, more prominent in Monroe’s life and narrative. One doesn’t become the sex symbol of an entire decade without enduring endless conversations and topics about physical beauty and the body itself as, in her case, is widely known. The actress states that her recognition of the importance of exterior beauty came as early as twelve years old, when she describes already having the measurements of a

seventeen-year-old. Monroe's need to describe her appearance did not come from vanity, but from the impact it had in many of her experiences to come.

Such experiences were touched by many aspects of her reality, one of them being her housing situation as an orphan, when she would change caretakers constantly. So, Monroe nurtured feelings of loneliness and became an introverted person who profusely daydreamt about the nice things she most desired, including being seen. In fact, she sought so much to escape from the labels she carried in reality, be them through her clothes or her shyness, that the craving migrated to her unconscious, as pointed out by her description and rationalization of a dream where she writes that "(d)reaming of people looking at me made me feel less lonely. I think I wanted them to see me naked because I was ashamed of the clothes I wore – the never changing faded blue dress of poverty. Naked, I was like other girls and not someone in an orphan's uniform" (MONROE, 2007, p. 14). Beauty, to Monroe, was not inherently sexual, including, and specially, when exuded by her – contrary to popular belief.

When describing the sudden change in people's perception of her on the account of her beauty, Monroe highlights the first occurrence of it when she was still in school. Her blouses were dirty and she borrowed a sweater from a younger girl who lived with her. With the tight sweater, her developing breasts became noticeable and her with them. Boys came closer and girls went farther. The boys began talking to the orphan girl, even offering to walk her home. The change also didn't go by unnoticed by adults, some of which whistled and whooped when she would pass by on the street. However, her response to what she considered improvements was not the response they imagined or hoped. She writes "I wasn't aware of anything sexual in their new liking for me, and there were no sex thoughts in my mind. I didn't think of my body as having anything to do with sex. It was more like a friend who had mysteriously appeared in my life, a sort of magic friend" (MONROE, 2007, p. 23).

Probably due to this line of thinking, Monroe also failed to notice, at first hand, the downside of this specific type of attention. The eyes that she attracted at such a young age did not add any value to her as a person, both overall and in their conception, for she was seen as an item. Safe to say that the sexualization society attributes to young girls seldom comes from their own conscious behavior¹⁴, firstly because many of them are too young to crave sexual affection, and secondly because this way of thinking derives more from the culturally disseminated idea of feminine perversion than from the acts or intentions of the girls themselves. Monroe herself writes that the nature of people's desires was attributed to her.

My admirers all said the same thing in different ways. It was my fault, their wanting to kiss and hug me. Some said it was the way I looked at them - with eyes full of passion. Others said it was my voice that lured them on. Still others said I gave off vibrations that floored them. I always felt they were talking about somebody else, not me. It was like being told they were attracted to me because of my diamonds and rubies. I not only had no passion in me, I didn't even know what it meant (MONROE, 2007, p. 28).

From Monroe's confession we are able to see a little more widely the unfairness that came with such "gift", especially when we take into account that both her condemnation and the rules of conduct she is supposedly breaking are no more than inflicted principles based on long established gender conceptions and dichotomies. As Bourdieu (1998) puts it; '(c)ollective expectations', positive or negative, through the subjective expectations that they impose; tend to inscribe themselves in bodies in the form of permanent dispositions (p. 61). This can be observed by the well recorded history of the expectations of women's purity, from the Virgin Mary to Queen Elizabeth I, such traits would consistently dictate their worth. Bourdieu (1998)

¹⁴ Articles such as *Not An Object: On Sexualization and Exploitation of Women and Girls* (SWIFTIE AND GOULD, 2021) and *The Oversexualization of Young Girls: Implications for Middle Grade Educators* (CURRY AND CHOATE, 2010) offer great insights to the causes and consequences of such problem.

classifies not only purity, but also chastity and reputation as symbolic goods that have the power to increase women's symbolic value in the eyes of society, thus the same society feels entitled to condemn those who deviate from their imposed molds and moral codes, even if those appointed guilty had no part nor say in any matters, for it is

a historical unconscious, linked not to a biological or psychological nature, like the difference between the sexes according to psychoanalysis, but to a specifically historical labour of construction – like the labour which aims to produce the separation of the boy from the female universe and one which can consequently be modified by a transformation of its historical conditions of production (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 54).

And as Monroe grew up and her body continued to develop, the looks and glances continued, as did the blaming. Even after her first marriage, the drinking and the dating propositions continued. However, with her, also grew her mind, and she learned how to identify more easily those who only acted nice when wanting something in return. Monroe mentions that some men went as far as to offer money in the disguise of gifts. They would offer to buy her clothes, jewelry, and anything that, in their mind, could tip the scale in their favor. This was bigger than her workplace, or her household, or her acquaintances. Even when walking the streets at night time, there they would also be, catcalling and generously proposing company to such lonely girls. Monroe recalls:

There were always men willing to help a girl be less lonely. They said, “Hi baby,” when you passed. When you didn't turn to look at them they sneered, “Stuck up, eh?”. Sometimes they followed you and kept up a one-sided conversation. “You look all right, baby. How about we drop in someplace for a drink and a dance.” After a half block when you didn't answer them, they got indignant and swore at you and dismissed you with a final insult (MONROE, 2007, p. 36).

Her words elucidate how, for many of these men, if not the overwhelming majority, the drive of their offerings was not necessarily born from desire or admiration, they came from the satisfaction of knowing they could get away with such conducts. The masculine domination that guides these actions acts upon the prospects of domination itself, there is pleasure in the power dynamics of these exchanges. Particularly because our notion of masculinity is intrinsically tied to power and domination, and thus, to them, to exert any or both of these behaviors is simply to exude one's masculinity. Bourdieu (1998) explains that

(t)he particularity of the dominant is that they are in a position to ensure that their particular way of being is recognized as universal. The definition of excellence is in any case charged with masculine implications that have the particularity of not appearing as such. The definition of a post, especially one of authority, includes all kinds of sexually characterized abilities and aptitudes [...] (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 62).

In fact, women's resistance to objectification is taken directly as a criticism of their masculinity, especially if we take into account that men are not traditionally encouraged to develop an identity that goes beyond the traces of their manliness, because, as Bourdieu (1998) explains, the distancing from their masculinity can feel like a distancing from their own identity, leaving them with the anguish that a shaken sense of self brings. Such occurrence would also inherently mean that they are closer to femininity, and in their knowledge of the subjugation that comes with the position, they must profusely reject it and go out of their way to move back to their previous placement, and the impediment of behaviors as the ones told by Monroe feels like an obstacle to their arrival at the desired position.

One of the major problems that arises once confronting or confronted by these behaviors is that, as pointed out by Monroe's confession itself, men's first response is anger or displeasure. Bourdieu (1998) mentions that even when it comes to well-intentioned men, masculine domination can still find its way in, especially due to its operation through the symbolic channels of the unconscious. This is one of the reasons why such violence was able to secure its presence before and after Monroe's ascension to fame. She herself mentions the differences between the "wolves" she encountered along the way. There were the pronounced wolves who made their intentions clear from the beginning – these whom she preferred because she dealt with them more continuously and knew their advances –, and there were the discreet wolves that managed to intimidate her more often, not because she was necessarily afraid of them, but because she could not tell at first glance what their intentions were.

The wolves were a part of Monroe's life prior to and subsequent of her entering in the cinematic industry but, once part of it, even from the very beginning where she would still be looking for jobs and relied on the casting system, the wolves had their own distinctions within Hollywood's structure. The big wolves were inside the studio gates, the big bosses who made the wheel turn. The little ones were outside the gates, they were "talent agents without offices, press agents without clients, contact men without contacts, and managers" and their offices usually came in the form of "drugstores and cheap cafés" where they would be "ready to put you over if you enrolled under their banner" and "their banner was usually a bed sheet" (MONROE, 2007, p. 46-48). It is not surprising, today or at the time, to know that the casting couch system¹⁵ was a big part of Hollywood's Golden Age and that the power play that ran such operation also relied on masculine domination. Monroe says:

I met them all. Phoniness and failure were all over them. Some were vicious and crooked. But they were as near to the movies as you could get. So you sat with them, listening to their lies and schemes. And you saw Hollywood with their eyes – an overcrowded brothel, a merry-go-round with beds for horses (MONROE, 2007, p. 48).

The main difference between the ordinary men that exerted their dominance in the streets of Los Angeles and the wolves who exerted theirs inside and outside the studios is that the first group relies on a societal license, one that upholds their behavior, in the sense that there was no consequence towards them. The studio bosses have, along with the societal license, the structural one. If the industry itself not only does not reprimand the use of masculine domination, at times, in fact, rewarding it, one deeply believes such behavior is natural for it was based on imbalanced prospects with which the pillars of the industry were built and fortified. The smoothing of the consequences of the masculine domination in Hollywood helps its perpetuation, especially once, according to Bourdieu (1998), the main necessity for one to notice the subtle presence of this symbolic dichotomy is a critical observation of naturalized practices.

The critical view upon such arbitrariness is of extreme necessity, otherwise the perception of its functioning can, and probably will, be used to further perpetuate it. In fact, it was common for men outside the industry to deceive people, majorly women, in need or in want for jobs through the casting couch system. Due to the somewhat vast knowledge of the little wolves in cafés and restaurants among the aspirants to Hollywood, anyone with a good amount of persuasion could fool the artists in the making. This is not to imply ignorance on the part of the deceived, it is to highlight their eagerness to be someone, so much so that they could be overly trusting regarding the opportunities that arrived. Monroe herself describes the time where she found herself in a dire situation as an outcome of one of these elaborate ruses.

¹⁵The casting couch system refers to the exchanges in which "sexual favours are demanded by an employer or someone in a position of power, from an employee in order to advance their career" (PEMBERTON, 2018).

She was set up for an audition with a man named Mr. Sylvester, who supposedly worked at a big studio. She was given a script and asked to meet him in his office where the audition would take place. While reading the monologue from her script, Monroe kept being asked to raise her dress higher and higher; and she recalls:

Still reciting from the script I pulled my dress up and uncovered my thighs. And suddenly Mr. Sylvester was on the couch. For a moment I was too sick at heart to move. I saw Mr. Sylvester plain. The whole thing was a fake. He didn't work for Goldwyn¹⁶. It wasn't his office. He had pulled the audition gag in order to get me alone on a couch. I sat with my dress up and the treasured script in my hand while Mr. Sylvester started pawing me. Then I moved. I socked him in the eye, jumped up, kicked him, and banged my heel down on his toes – and ran out of the building. For some time afterward Mr. Sylvester's words haunted me as if I had heard the true voice of Hollywood – “Higher, higher, higher.” (MONROE, 2007, p. 52).

Monroe's telling of her sexual harassment is an insight to how prejudicial the conception that job opportunities for women, especially in Hollywood but not limited to it, should demand something other than their qualifications. This idea that, when discussed by Bourdieu (1998), carries with it an apparent call for submissiveness from the woman's part that, in a twisted way, can be assessed by their decision to comply or to go against sexual advances. Such advances, more often than not, come from the pleasure taken in fetishizing women, in removing them from the role of subject and pushing them to the one of object. From the theory of literary paternity discussed by Gilbert and Gubar (2000) to the theory of The Other explained by Beauvoir (1949), this constant need to place women in an inanimate role comes from the satisfaction of defining others, particularly when it gives you the force to impose yourself and your beliefs on the other person. It offers means to secure your source of power.

In the cinematic industry and on the silver screen itself such satisfaction not only also existed but made itself more pronounced given that this particular form of art relies mostly on the visual aid. In 1975, film critic Laura Mulvey published her essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* that offered more insight on the objectification of women, now to the pleasure of an entire audience. Mulvey (1988) originated the term and theory of the Male Gaze, a masculine look responsible for depriving women of subjectivity once subjected to such gaze. Mulvey's (1988) theory is, particularly nowadays with the increase of women in the field of film studies and criticism, exceptionally used to name a problem that – to borrow the words of Betty Friedan (1963) – for long had no name. Posteriorly, Bourdieu (1998) himself would come to express similar ideas although referring to society at large and not as a specification of the silver screen and the cinematic industry.

Everything in the genesis of the female habitus and in the social conditions of its actualization combines to make the female experience of the body the limiting case of the universal experience of the body-for-others, constantly exposed to the objectification performed by the gaze and the discourse of others (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 63).

The male gaze not only affected but also can be clearly seen throughout Monroe's entire career. Even before she was Marilyn Monroe the sex goddess and bombshell, she was already brought into the industry based on the prospects of sex. Sex itself was not, and remains to not be, the problem; Monroe herself thought so, to such a degree that she wrote “People have curious attitudes about nudity, just as they have about sex. Nudity and sex are the most commonplace things in the world. Yet people often act as if they were things that existed only

¹⁶Monroe is referring to the studio Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer (MGM), popularly known for their roaring lion at the end of their productions.

on Mars” (MONROE, 2007, p. 60). The issue relied on the purpose of the use of nudity and sex, for they were not used in an empowering or liberating manner as it came to be after the sexual revolution¹⁷. The sole purpose of their use was to gain pleasure from seeing women as they had written them and directed them, not as they actually were.

Monroe recalls one audition from one of her earlier roles where the part asked for someone who could walk lusciously and nothing more. The sensuality and sexuality of the character through the male gaze did not add anything of value, or even interest, to the part because the only reason why she was on the scene and on the screen was to arouse the men around her, including and especially older ones. This was made clear to her in the process of the audition as well, as she writes how she was explained of what the role demanded from the actress and asked to show if she had what it would take:

“This role calls for a young lady who can walk by me in such a manner as to arouse my elderly libido and cause smoke to issue from my ears.”
Harpo honked a horn at the end of his cane and grinned at me. I walked the way Groucho wanted. “Exceedingly well done,” he beamed.
Harpo’s horn honked three times, and he struck his fingers in his mouth and blew a piercing whistle. “Walk again,” said Mr. Cowan. I walked up and down in front of the three men. They stood grinning. “It’s Mae West, Theda Bara, and Bo Peep all rolled into one,” said Groucho. “We shoot the scene tomorrow morning. Come early.” (MONROE, 2007, p. 99-100).

Interestingly, such confessions prove the point that even when given opportunities, the variety of women’s picks is very limited and, sometimes, non-existent. As the female writers before them, women within the film industry faced a similar paradox of choices when having to decide if a twisted presence was better than no presence at all. Bourdieu (1998) himself addresses the conditions of the agency of women on the cinematic field when discussing the workplace imbalance that symbolic violence and masculine domination help to maintain:

Thus, in the television studio, women are almost always confined to minor roles, variations on the role of 'hostess' traditionally assigned to the 'weaker sex'; even when they are not flanked by a man, for whom they serve as a foil, and who often plays on all the ambiguities implied in the 'couple' relationship, through jokes and more or less subtle allusions, they have difficulty in imposing themselves and what they have to say, and are relegated to a conventional role of 'host' or 'presenter' (BOURDIEU, 1998, p. 58-59).

It is, however, not surprising the fact that the male gaze is not exclusive to the motion pictures themselves, encompassing all aspects of the industry. Behind the scenes with women confined to minor roles of production, if they got any role at all. Taking into account the statistics published by *The Times*¹⁸ in 2020, which showed women’s participation decrease in roles that did not concern acting, especially after the big studios concentrated much of the power of production between themselves. This structure was responsible for accentuating the gender dichotomy in Hollywood and further unbalancing the already existing power relations.

These conditions did not make, or helped to make, things easier or equal, but they did make obstinate women, even if partly because it was the only choice they had besides giving

¹⁷ This revolution consisted of a profound change in mentalities, values, knowledge, and behavior toward a more optimistic and positive conception of sexuality, based on the acknowledgment of sexual pleasure as a source of fulfillment. This long-term process was founded on the cultural and scientific transformations initiated in the 1950s, before social and political movements established sexual matters as political questions that called for a liberating program (GIAMI, 2020).

¹⁸ After the establishment of the studio system, the numbers regarding women’s participation in the industry were below than the ones achieved in the 20s. “In 1922 about 22 percent of screenwriters were women, a peak that has never been surpassed, about 10 percent of producers were women and 3 percent directors” (MALVERN, 2020). As put by Malvern (2020), at the time of the publication of the article, these statistics had not yet been surpassed.

up. This translates into the work actresses had to put to stay relevant and maintain their place even when already established. Works like *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) directed by Billy Wilder and *All About Eve* (1950), directed by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, explored themes that criticized Hollywood and the theater themselves. Anything from big scandals – like Ingrid Bergman’s and Elizabeth Taylor’s affairs – to aging – an exceedingly small percentage of women had long-lasting careers as Katherine Hepburn or Olivia De Havilland did – could bring about the end of an actress’ journey. With Monroe it was not much different, and she was aware of it.

Since her debut on the silver screen, Monroe was not satisfied with the confinement of the roles she was given. Actively trying to prove she was capable of being put in a wide range of genres, she pursued numerous classes of many different subjects – from dramatic to dancing and singing lessons – as a way to have the preparation that other people with opportunities had. She writes “I knew how third rate I was. I could actually feel my lack of talent, as if it were cheap clothes I was wearing inside. But, my god, how I wanted to learn! To change, to improve! I didn’t want anything else. Not men, not money, not love, but the ability to act” (MONROE, 2007, p. 64).

And that she acquired. Along with her friend and acting coach Natasha Lytess, Monroe created “Marilyn”, not the name, but the image. And people loved it. The baby voice, the overlined lips, the platinum blonde hair, and the “jiggly” walk. What could attest more for her ability to act than people’s belief that the persona she had created was herself? However, in spite of the popular assumption, for the most part of her career Monroe did not resent “Marilyn”, after all it was her effort and cultivation that ensured its success. She writes “I used to say to myself, what the devil have you got to be proud about, Marilyn Monroe? And I’d answer, ‘Everything, everything.’” (MONROE, 2007, p. 65). What she did resent from the very beginning were the limitations thrust upon “Marilyn”.

These limitations often came in the form of constant typecastings¹⁹ that worked alongside the male gaze and the masculine domination that reduced her to the position of object. This role of the muse reserved for many of the “beauty queens” of the Golden Age was inherited directly from the patriarchal stereotypes that also inflicted the literary field, long before the birth of cinema. In her case, the specific trope²⁰ she was constricted to was the one of the dumb blonde – a character marked by her unintelligence, naivete and sexualized physical beauty. In 1953 Monroe released three movies – *Niagara*, *How to Marry a Millionaire* and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* – that showcased “Marilyn” and projected her into stardom. Although being early roles, the latter two movies, while projecting “Marilyn”, the persona and the dumb blonde stereotype, made it easier for the public and the industry to conflate them as synonyms, and as their helping hand they had extremely popular scenes that to this day are still in the public imagination.

Image 1 – Red Bathing Suit Entrance

¹⁹ “(T)o always give an actor the same type of character to play, usually because he or she is physically suited to that type of part” (CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, n.d.).

²⁰ “(S)omething such as an idea, phrase, or image that is often used in a particular artist’s work, in a particular type of art, in the media, etc.” (CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, n.d.).



Source: *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953)

Image 2 – Diamonds are a Girl’s Best Friend



Source: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953)

The juggernaut of iconic scenes – the flying white dress –, that once again reduced Marilyn to her “dumb blonde” characteristics, came in the 1955 box office smash *The Seven Year Itch* with her role as “the girl”. Although the movie’s screenplay, written by Billy Wilder, contained meta commentary on the public’s perception of Marilyn Monroe, the takeaway of moviegoers was much more restricted to one particular moment – the subway grade scene – thus almost negating the efforts to portray her as a complex and multifaceted person. This can be understood through Mulvey’s (1988) notions of cinema revolving around visual pleasure, for as no matter the ideas showcased in the script, what really stands out in this type of media are the visuals – and what the visuals of Monroe’s roles communicated was that she was an object to be ogled without substance underneath the appearances. Mulvey (1988) adds that this type of exhibition further shows that “(t)he presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to work against the development of the story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation” (MULVEY, 1988, p. 62).

Monroe's frustration in relation to her tendency to serve as this erotic contemplation grew even larger with a comment made by her friend, actor and writer, Anton Chekhov, when responding to her inquiry about the way she was seen by others when on the screen. After her friend's long rant about her sexualization, especially by the studio, Monroe answered why she now felt particularly bothered by the situation clarifying: "'Because I want to be artist,' I answered, 'not an erotic freak. I don't want to be sold to the public as a celluloid aphrodisiac. Look at me and start shaking. It was all right for the first few years. But now it's different.'" (MONROE, 2007, p. 173-174).

The lack of understanding Chekhov expresses in his questioning of why Monroe does not want this perception from the public if it is making her money and bringing her fame goes to show that in the eyes of society the objectification of women should not concern one so much if the consequences are mainly symbolic. When Bourdieu (1998) writes that women are "socially inclined to treat themselves as aesthetic objects" (p. 99-100), he means that the unquestioning compliance of women is expected by a society that is accustomed to limit and subjugate them. If women accepted the terms imposed on them, it would give a symbolic license for the continuation of their treatment and help ensure the established functioning that has been in place for so long by posing no challenges to it. Thus, due to Monroe's discomfort with her position, she started to go against the diminishing offers of the studio, and before her next big box office, she opened her production company with friend Milton Greene – *Marilyn Monroe Productions* – as to now be not only the image on the screen, but the producer behind it.

This fact made her decision to star in Billy Wilder's 1959 groundbreaking film *Some Like It Hot* even more interesting because the part of singer Sugar Kane did not stray far from the ones that defined her before. Although having released two more movies in between *The Seven Year Itch* and *Some Like It Hot*, both with respectable box offices, they did not reach the level of cultural relevance that the latter did. What this communicates is that even if the audience found itself somewhat open to Monroe's migrations to other genres or other types of characters, the one they were consistently in love with was "Marilyn"; even if 1959's "Marilyn" was not exactly the same as 1955's, not only because the use of her persona did not render all her characters alike, but also due to Monroe's integration in the Actors Studio in New York and adoption of method acting.

Nevertheless, just as their idea that "Marilyn" was all in one, frozen in time, what she brought to her parts were essentially conceived as the same. In fairness, this disseminated conception was cultivated over the years through the male gaze that wrote, filmed, and directed her. As a consequence, it led to the perception of her as this inhuman figure that was a channel for sex and seduction. In the eyes of the public, her perceived lack of humanity came from an immaterial quality that made it almost unthinkable that she would want to be, or could be, treated as an actual person. This is illustrated by Monroe's recalling of a friend's answer to a questioning she made about her on screen appearance where he said:

"I understand your problem with your studio now, Marilyn, and I even understand your studio. You are a young woman who gives off sex vibrations – no matter what you are doing or thinking. The whole world has already responded to those vibrations. They come off the movie screens when you are on them. And your studio bosses are only interested in your sex vibrations. They care nothing about you as an actress. You can make them a fortune by merely vibrating in front of the camera. I see now why they refuse to regard you as an actress. You are more valuable to them as a sex stimulant. And all they want of you is to make money out of you by photographing your erotic vibrations. I can understand the reasons and plans" (MONROE, 2007, p. 173).

Along with the dissatisfaction and overall problems this perception of her brought, the popular idea that Marilyn the persona and the person were interchangeable made the treatment she received in the workplace find its way into her personal life and relationships. Before Monroe became worldwide famous, she was already subjected to symbolic violence in her relationships due to her beauty. She writes many instances detailing one of her partner's comments about his viewing of her; "Most of his talk to me was a form of criticism. He criticized my mind. He kept pointing out how little I knew and how unaware of life I was" (MONROE, 2007, p. 94) she states. It is not difficult to suppose that his opinions were made through the conception that intellectualism and femininity do not belong together, especially taking into account that Monroe had always been beautiful and liked what were, and are, deemed feminine topics such as clothes, shoes, makeup, etc. He would also compare her mind almost to that of a child and deem it the cause for her behaviors he did not like:

"You cry too easily," he'd say. "That's because your mind isn't developed. Compared to your breasts it's embryonic." I couldn't contradict him because I had to look up that word in a dictionary. "Your mind is inert," he'd say. "You never think about life. You just float through it on that pair of water wings you wear." (MONROE, 2007, p. 95).

His opinion of her lack of experiences in life is especially bold to those of us who know from where she came and where she arrived. This invalidation of female experiences and thoughts is a symptom of the culture of masculine domination that represents women as vessels that receive their personal traits from men, in the same vein as the assumption that competent and bright female writers were, in some degree, males. Thus, if women have experiences, it is because she acquired it through men, not through living. It is, though, an intrinsically symbolic perception that can, and most generally will, go by unnoticed and will, probably, be further normalized, to such an extent that Monroe found herself agreeing with everything her partner was saying.

It goes to show that symbolic violence is so invasive and oppressive that even in personal relationships, where one would expect to be understood and loved, it creates the space for hurtful judgements corroborated by long disseminated dichotomies regarding gender and morals. This breach found by such violence was also present in Monroe's second marriage to baseball player Joe DiMaggio. The actress mentions two instances that played a huge part in their marriage; her publicity and her clothes. Monroe describes:

"I wonder if I can take all your crazy publicity," Joe said.
 "You don't have to be part of it," I argued.
 "I am," he said. "And it bothers me."
 "It's part of my career," I said. "When you were a baseball idol you didn't duck photographers."
 "Yes, I did," he answered.
 "I can't," I said.
 "Don't I know it," Joe nodded.
 "Do you want me to hide in a basement?" I asked.
 "We'll see how it works out," he said.
 There were a number of things to "work out." One was the low neckline of my dresses and suits. I gave in on this one. I wear no more low-cut dresses. Instead they have a sort of collar. The neckline is an inch under my chin (MONROE, 2007, p. 175-176).

DiMaggio's annoyance with Monroe's publicity is, in the least, paradoxical, given the fact that not only did he meet her after she was famous but chose to pursue the relationship knowingly. One can only assume DiMaggio had hopes to make Monroe give up or tone down her career and aspirations after accepting to be with him. The same line of thought can be used by his discomfort regarding the way she dressed for, again, it was widely known she

used form-fitting clothes, especially when doing publicity or walking red carpets. DiMaggio's idea that he could change Monroe to a more fitting image of the conservative morals he lived by is telling of the social conviction that women can be changed, traditionally for the better, once they find the right man. The fact that DiMaggio would make such demands and expected her to instantly comply is a clear example of symbolic violence, more specifically of masculine domination, for his reasoning behind these demands came from the sole assumption that only because of his position of dominance as a man, he would not find any barriers or push backs – and, to some extent, he was right, as we can tell by her agreeing to some of his requests.

Monroe's acceptance of things her partners said or asked is also a clear example of the effects of the cultural imposition of patriarchal morals and ideals. The symbolic violence thrust upon her had already made its way into her unconscious so as to refrain from a critical interpretation that could produce a different stance. Bourdieu (1998) explains that "(a)ll the conditions for the full exercise of male domination are thus combined. The precedence universally accorded to men is affirmed in the objectivity of the social structures and the productive or reproductive activities [...]" (p. 33). Thus, reaffirming his own clarifications that symbolic violence can be, and most traditionally is, perpetuated by both parts in their respective designated roles. Both DiMaggio and Monroe were exerting symbolic violence in their own carefully cultivated societal place.

After writing about her marriage to DiMaggio, Monroe spends a few pages telling about her trip to Korea to entertain the United States' military troops that were in the war. She describes the experience as one of the most fulfilling things she has ever done, and her reception was overwhelmingly welcoming. Unfortunately, Milton Greene writes "This is where Marilyn's manuscript ended when she gave it to me" (MONROE, 2007, p. 185). Thus, here also ends our analysis. Sadly, in the posterior years of her life Monroe did not put into words more of her own story, and *My Story* became her only written record of her life. As a consequence of the premature end of the book, our analysis was not able to include many important and distinguished moments of her journey in great detail or at all. However, the events we were able to analyze attest to the presence and prevalence of symbolic violence in Monroe's life and career, as well as its adaptability when it comes to different settings and circumstances.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Symbolic violence has proved itself to be a constant of human condition, a result of the patriarchal structure at the root of the very core of society, living and growing with the help of power structures and gender dichotomies so as to perpetuate itself through its own victims. The presence of such violence in *My Story* and in Marilyn Monroe's life and career are not only clearly observable but its consequences were particularly dire. Although not being a condition exclusive to Monroe, her status made the projection of this violence reach striking levels. Her experiences as a woman and an actress may have seemed too distant for people, on a broader level, to associate with, but her dealing with these circumstances goes to show that, paradoxical as it may seem, prejudice does not discriminate.

That may be easy to forget for, nowadays, sixty years after her passing, with her image being used in a variety of products and advertisements, there has been an increasing tendency to distance her further and further from humanity, which also disregards the impact she had on the functioning of the industry itself. Her forwarding attitude regarding sex, her rebellion against the studio, the opening of her production company, and many other political stances she was a part of or ahead on seem to get lost on the sea of sensationalism. Monroe and many other actresses of the Golden Age paved the way for the reckoning Hollywood has been

recently facing with the #MeToo movement and representation related issues. However, many of them, if not their majority, are not remembered in such a manner.

Monroe was a symbol for an entire decade, and during that time what she most wanted was to be seen in all her complexity. The current rendition of her overall person into a perpetual symbol and an inanimate object are too consequences of a culture that fails to see the value in people, most commonly celebrities, beyond their art or alongside it. This sentiment is also encouraged by the many works, in various media outlets, made about her – most of which have superficial views or are completely dehumanizing.

Therefore, it was of extreme importance for this research to work with Monroe's words themselves. Unfortunately, she did not gift us with a longer narrative or posterior ones, which in her particular case, would have made an enormous difference – especially considering the number of stories about her that were, and continue to be, penned by men. There is an overwhelming difference that lies in an autobiography and biographies penned by men with an eye for objectifying and a desire for capitalizing off of their perceptions of reality.

Fortunately, in the short lifespan of thirty-six years she left a legacy that, against the challenges of time, still holds its ground and showcases why they had such cultural impact. Monroe's perseverance, strength and resilience would be enough to make her an example. Her charisma, beauty, and talent would be enough to perceive her as a role model. But all that she was and cannot be encompassed by words is what makes her timeless. Through this research, with its paradoxical or contradictory parts as they are, we hoped to, by treating her words as a case study, somehow give more insight on at least a fraction of what Marilyn Monroe was to make the audience broaden their perception of herself and her persona.

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