

# Male frailty on Peruvian TV fiction: “La reina de las carretillas” case study

## Fragilidad masculina en la ficción televisiva peruana: el caso de *La reina de las carretillas*

### Fragilidade masculina na ficção televisiva peruana: o caso de *La reina de las carretillas*

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the male representation on television fiction, focusing on the male characters of the Peruvian miniseries *La reina de las carretillas*. Through an analysis matrix designed for this work and a qualitative methodology on social representation, a proposal of different masculinities can be recognized, opposing to female representations shown on this miniseries: entrepreneur, empowered women. Male characters move away from the hegemonic patriarchal gender model, and perform variations that answer to egalitarian masculinities, which are aligned to the politically correct discourse of modern society. The contribution of this paper to the field of study is the analysis matrix and the proposal of a male representation which is different to the one shown by classic Latin American melodrama.

**Keywords:** Gender, masculinity, television, fiction, social representation, Peru.

#### RESUMEN

Analizamos las representaciones masculinas en la ficción televisiva, concentrándonos en la miniserie peruana *La Reina de las carretillas*. A partir de una matriz de análisis y de trabajo cualitativo sobre las formas de representación, reconocemos una propuesta de diversas masculinidades, que se contraponen a las representaciones femeninas: mujeres empoderadas, con agencia. Los personajes masculinos se alejan del modelo hegemónico patriarcal, y muestran variaciones que responden a masculinidades alineadas al discurso políticamente correcto de la sociedad actual. La contribución de este trabajo está en la matriz de análisis, y la propuesta de una representación masculina alejada del relato latinoamericano clásico.

**Palabras clave:** Género, masculinidad, televisión, ficción, representaciones sociales, Perú.

#### RESUMO

Neste trabalho são analisadas as representações masculinas na ficção televisiva, com especial foco na minissérie peruana *La reina de las carretillas*. A partir de uma matriz de análise e de trabalho qualitativo sobre as formas de representação, se propõe uma diversidade de masculinidades, que se contrapõem às representações femininas: mulheres empoderadas, com atitude. Os personagens masculinos se distanciam do modelo hegemônico patriarcal e mostram variações que respondem a masculinidades alinhadas ao discurso politicamente correto da sociedade atual. A contribuição deste trabalho está na matriz de análise e na proposta de uma representação masculina distante do relato melodramático latino-americano clássico.

**Palavras-chave:** Gênero, masculinidade, televisão, ficção, representações sociais, Peru.

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## SOCIAL REPRESENTATION AND TV FICTION

Television has become an articulator of reality by promoting imaginaries through various television products and showcasing models that are consumed by viewers, resulting in a considerable degree of influence in molding social behaviors. That is, this media shows cultural patterns that define a society. In the case of fiction, imaginaries are reproduced from roles and behaviors their characters perform. Regarding gender – understood as a cultural construction drawn from sexual difference - the masculine and feminine roles, as well as other genders that stand away from the binary view, respond to the commandments society builds on each of them.

Melodramatic fiction has a tradition of hetero-normative representations of gender that reinforces traditional values of the patriarchal society. However, in recent decades changes have been observed in this traditional model, which may be reflecting changes in society itself; at the same time, fictions could be proposing changes in the behavior of male subjects that escape the hetero-normative matrix.

The concept of social representation is of interest for this work, as it encompasses the idea that our relationship with the world is not an objective relationship. Abric (2011) proposes, “There is no objective reality. All reality is represented, appropriated by the individual or group, and rebuilt in its cognitive system” (p. 12). This implies that our understanding of the world and what happens in it is arbitrated by society’s own schemes and the ideology that - as Hall (2010, p. 207) reminds us - is a system of representation that materializes in social practices. In this way, social practices make visible the system of rules existing in a society, concretize them, and shape the representations and the way we understand the world and relate to it from the filter of ideology. And, thus, the behaviors of individuals will be defined through this filter.

To interact in society we need patterns, rules governing our forms of behavior, enabling society to operate and develop with the participation of all its individuals. To this end, sets of models are used to make it possible to interpret social meanings, which are known as “social representations”. From these we give meaning to the different elements of reality, from which we build - among other things - a system of references

which establishes what is “appropriate” behavior, and they legitimize – give meaning to - our own actions.

Hall (2010) proposes that “the important thing about systems of representation is that they are not singular” (p. 208), i.e., there is not a single system. Thus, the system of references is not unique, and neither are the ways of representation.

In his exposition on the functions of social representations, Abric (2011) explains that, among others, is forming identity, allowing to define the identity and safeguard the specificity of groups, which is related to the social control exercised by the community on each of its members (pp. 15-17). This implies that by acting on the behavior of individuals, by providing them with a reference on how to interact socially, the identity function is at the same time safeguarding the ways in which that society operates and is structured, preserving what is considered appropriate behavior.

Television is a device that is constantly presented as a render of reality, although authors such as Barbero, Gremm or Vassallo have evidenced that it rather merely shows a representation of that reality, and Bourdieu (1997) states that it has become a device to create reality.

Individuals relate to the world through various media, among them, television intermediation. The farther away a place is, a higher intermediation will exist in different media, because there will be less chances of a direct relationship with that reality. In this way, subjects handle knowledge and adopt positions on what happens in reality through the representation that the media makes of it, such as television. While one might think that this happens mainly with those products that are understood as shows “of reality” - news, for example – it also happens with fiction shows, because even if the public knows that what they are watching is not real, they pick it up as a representation of reality, a staging based on something that is real. Fuenzalida (1996) proposes that people observed the stories of fiction in hope that in them “life” is present, something that can be recognized as their own, and indicates “people appropriate what they recognize” (p. 102).

The TV fiction proposes to its public representations of behaviors, models, relationships and rules that respond to the society that produced the television

messages. These messages develop discourses that usually respond to the hegemonic ideology, and reflect the values and customs of said society. In the case of Latin America, melodrama is a type of fiction that has the greatest impact on the population, and in their stories specific models of behavior and gender are proposed. To observe them is important, since among the multiple circles where gender is formed (home, school, Church, etc.), one cannot fail to leave aside what comes from the media.

The role that women and men must comply to in society is proposed in many of the stories of Latin American melodrama, but it is not something fixed: it has changed from the own progress of societies and the understanding of the values that each gender is assigned in them. In most classic productions, the role represented and proposed to women answers to one that places her as the mother of the family, helpful, caring for the house and under the protection/domain of the male. More contemporary productions have not abandoned all that representation, but have given space for different representations, proposals for female characters less dependent on the male figure. Some feminist hypotheses indicate “the telenovela legitimates and socially values a feminine discourse that has been traditionally undervalued and considered irrelevant by the patriarchal society” (Fuenzalida, 1996, p. 93). In this way, we can consider that some melodramatic stories empower women and their discourses, and may potentially come into conflict with the patriarchal discourse. Against a society in which this speech loses strength, the representation of women takes another perspective, as well as the representation of men.

## GENDER AND MASCULINITY

It is necessary to define what is understood in this work as “masculinity”, which leads to make explicit the notion of gender as a construction that is made of individuals in society based on sexual differences, which produces meanings that arise in practices and discourses that define the behaviors of different individuals. In that sense, the study develops from the proposal of Lamas (1996), for whom “gender is a system of cultural relations between the sexes (...) a symbolic construction, established on biological data of sexual

difference”(p. 12); “it is a kind of cultural “filter” culture with which we interpret the world and ourselves, and also a kind of armor in which we constrain our life” (Lamas, 1995, p. 62).

Being a social construct, the notion of gender will be determined by the time, the place and the society in which it takes place, so it is feasible for it to vary, although their changes tend to occur slowly. As far as construction, the gender sets normative discourses about how subjects should be genderized. For this, representations of gender is worked and handled in various media, and various institutions socialize these representations, reinforcing them through the discourses of gender role and relationships in which they are replicated. These discourses are modified and adapted, as individuals grow older, since the construction will gradually be built, as it has specific mandates for each stage of peoples’ growth.

Gender constructions and representations preconfigure a series of actions, activities, hopes and expectations for men and women in society. Hall (2010) warns, “We are actually spoken to and spoken for us [in the ideological discourse]. The newborn child (...) is already expected, named and positioned in advance by forms of ideology”(p. 214).

The hetero-normative system exerts a heavy pressure in the case of male identity, which is constantly monitored, demanding to be continuously demonstrated and waiting for actions and attitudes that reassert its power. They are actions destined to achieve for the individual the characteristics that define masculinity to which it aspires, a series of behaviors that will make the subject feel a “full” man. This is what is known as “hegemonic masculinity”, which in the words of Kimmel (1997) is “the image of masculinity of men who control the power, which has become the rule, intended to teach young men how to become “real” men” (p. 51).

As stated by Brandes (1980, cited by Cruz and Ortega, 2007, p. 128), male identities are developed in relation to women, and what exists in that relationship is an asymmetry that is produced and reproduced in the exchange of material and symbolic assets (rites, myths, relations of kinship, marriage) (Bourdieu, 2000, pp. 59-61). To the patriarchal system, the man constitutes itself as a being responsible for providing for the family

elements that allow success, subsistence, progress and prestige. He is responsible for the honor of the family, the continuation of the lineage, and how the family is depicted in general. The male head of family is who works, imposes order, makes major decisions and determines the distribution of resources and affections. A man who fails to support his family, who does not know how to defend its honor and carries it along the path of decay rather than success, will be a weakened, devalued, despised subject. The figure of the father, provider, the Patriarch, the *pater familias*, is the supreme figure in the hetero-normative, patriarchal system, and is more an ideal than a reality. However, it is expected that men aspire to that level, and that they strive to achieve the vast majority of the qualities.

Facing this patriarchal ideal, other realities and masculinities coexist, of which the most relevant to this work are explained below.

In Latin America, the figure of the man has been much associated with the “macho” [chauvinist], one that exercises his power in a public way and flaunts it. The reaffirmation of the “macho” is constant, and is exercised both in private and in public, since it is necessary to exercise his command not only before his peers in society, but also in front of his family, and especially over his partner, whom he dominates and treats on many occasions as an object of his possession. Fuller (1997) indicates that, in Latin America, masculinity is related to machismo, which is “the obsession of the male with supremacy and virility that is manifested in the sexual conquest of women. (...) Dominance over women but without assuming his role as head of the family and father who provides” (p. 37). Not only does the chauvinist man assume his superiority to women, but also expresses it, turning it into a habit, exercising it even with violence, and even though it is far from the male ideal of the patriarchal model, he feels powerful complying with a role in society that is natural to him, almost like a divine right. Precisely, the lack of resources and the dependency against dominant groups configure gender relationships with an exacerbation of male dominance over women, since it is one of the few sources of prestige left for chauvinistic men (Fuller, 2001, p. 40).

The models of masculinity as the one described have suffered few changes over time, though, as ensured by Hearn (1999, cited by Cruz and Ortega, 2007, p. 122), “in post-modern societies the end of male certainty of

having a place assured in the world is seen”. Changes in today’s societies have been modifying the image of men, especially from the new functions and possibilities of action in the public space that have been taken on by women. The fact that women take action in the public space – a place traditionally reserved to the men, while women stayed in the private space, the home – has undermined the way men act, putting in doubt its privileged position. Castells (1998) proposes that the strides in women’s rights have led to the fragmentation of the patriarchal State, subtracting power from men and generating changes in the male subjects. Thus one speaks of “masculinities in crisis” or “changing masculinities”, which assume new positions within the society and gives way to a relationship with women that is no longer of absolute power over them.

Among the new masculinities is the egalitarian man, also called democratic man, in which the position of the male is not of exercising power over women. The egalitarian man understands that the rights are shared, there are no privileges and responsibilities and duties are communal to men and women. In this type of relationship both the private and public space is shared, establishing a horizontal relationship, rather than a vertical relationship in which one dominates the other. But this kind of male, as well as the patriarchal, is an ideal rather than a reality. The roots of hegemonic masculinity are still strong, and underlie many of their attitudes and customs. However, today many men project themselves towards the idea of the egalitarian male, they share household tasks, the responsibility of raising children and the livelihoods of the home, without feeling that it belittles their masculinity or turns them into subjects of less worth. In today’s society, the main discourse is that this is the model that should be followed: one who respects women, respects and facilitates<sup>1</sup> their rights.

In the Peruvian case, Fuller (1997) says that already in the nineties a change could be seen in the perception and representations of gender, although this was more a rationalization than a true attitude change (p. 46). In this way, even though the official discourse and the general attitude shifts towards a more egalitarian relationship between different genders, reality is not necessarily at the level of those desires. “The discourse is dominated by the equal partner, but in practice the asymmetric model remains” (Fuller, 2001, p. 472). However, all the same and despite the contradictions of

reality, there is a male who attempts to advance towards that equality in today's society, and his figure is part of the representations that are currently handled.

Finally, we can find a different masculinity, the emasculated man. This type of masculinity is present in the social imaginary since ancient times, and it is what the model of hegemonic masculinity fights against, since in this case the power has been inverted and the male is dominated by women. It is a male who will not have domain or power over women and, on the contrary, she will be the one who exercises that power. Peers can regard a man who leaves decision-making to the woman, who does not attempt to exert power over her, as a diminished subject, without value. "The contrary notion [to virility] is expressed by the adjective "meek", meaning domesticated and also castrated" (Fuller, 1997, p. 33). From this concept, we can understand that, for the male, being tamed is equivalent to losing his freedom, to not have the privilege to do what he wishes to do without accountability; in the figurative, the subject thus qualified has lost that which determines how to be manly - i.e., what identifies him as male - and is considered a castrated being. For the macho, an emasculated man is despised, as it has lost all possibility of power and, worse still, has granted that power to women. It is for this reason that hegemonic masculinity will constantly claim this "betrayal".

We should not, however, confuse the emasculated man with the egalitarian man, as the latter shares power with his partner, negotiates it, but retains a part of it. In a study on the behavior of the middle class men in Lima, Fuller (1997) noted that the new generations are more democratic, and "represent women as sharers of the decision making, but never the ones to lead" (p. 160). We see how the idea of egalitarian man is then a transit, an ideal, and an attempt - in the case of the men - to change a situation of inequality with their partners that they rationally understand as unfair.

It is possible for the egalitarian man to also be belittled by the chauvinists [machos], since he shares attitudes and activities that are identified as feminine, but its part of power still allows him to legitimize himself before his peers, as well as being protected by the respect for women and, above all, by current society's discourse.

We must, finally, indicate that the masculinity associated with machismo is not necessarily accepted

by the hegemonic masculinity, as it lacks elements that are central to get closer to the ideal of the patriarchal model. According to this ideological pattern, the responsibility, the production and paternity are necessary elements to achieve the appropriate level of a mature man, the passage from a chauvinist to true man. Already Fuller (1997) warns that manhood must be accompanied by responsibility, "in other words, a man is only player, and not a successful male" (p. 169). In this way, virile men, but irresponsible parents that do not become providers and organizers of the family nucleus, will be on a stadium that still does not allow them to approach the image of full male, according to the patriarchal conception.

#### **TV FICTION AND LA REINA DE LAS CARRETIILLAS [QUEEN OF PUSHCARTS]**

*... TV efficiency is rather inspirational in the field of emotions and attitudes. The TV can broadcast massively, give visibility, legitimization, prestige and value. (Fuenzalida, 1996, p. 102)*

Some Peruvian fictions of the last decade present men and women that differ from those represented above. While classical Latin American melodrama has a woman as the protagonist of the story, this was a frail subject, submissive, a victim that required the presence of a male subject — commonly a man with some sort of power, a provider, proactive - who would allow the realization of the female character. Contemporary fictions, on the other hand, are increasingly showing more different female characters, proactive, entrepreneurial women, that arise without the need of a male partner and solve their problems independently. At the same time, male subjects also started to differ, with a role that no longer locates them in the classic space and, sometimes, even shows them weakened and as subordinates. While in many contemporary fictions a struggle of power between the genders displayed can be present, as a more equal representation advances, stories where the conflict occurs among women, and no longer between men and women, have been created. It is the case of *La reina de las carretillas* [*Queen of pushcarts*], which presents the story of women with different levels of power that will face each other to achieve their goals.

This miniseries was produced in the year 2012 by Del Barrio productions, and broadcasted by America Television, where it achieved high ratings, turning into the third most viewed fiction of the year, with an average share of 43.37% (Ibero-American Observatory of TV fiction - OBITEL [Observatorio Iberoamericano de Ficción Televisiva], 2013, p. 409). It tells the story of Estrella, a humble woman with a great skill for cooking, living in Lobitos - a fishing village in the North of Peru - with Lázaro, her husband and the father of their unborn baby daughter. Lázaro's abuses over her forces her to flee to the capital, Lima, where she begins a new life selling food in a market. Encouraged by the owner of the market (Doralisa) and a friend (Lily), she manages to survive and rise thanks to her effort, work, and the good quality of the food she cooks. To do this she must face Inés, her childhood friend who initially seems to support her, but is actually the antagonist of the story. Inés envies Estrella and what she represents (maternity, cooking talent, affection, sympathy) and tries to stay with everything Estrella achieves, including her daughter. Estrella meets Pedro, who also works at the market in Lima repairing electrical appliances, and a romance ensues between them. After several plot twists and problems, Estrella succeeds in her food business and marries Pedro.

In addition to Pedro and Lázaro, there are other important male characters in the story. Próspero is the husband of Doralisa and manages the market and business of both. Kike is Lily's husband at the beginning of the story, but his infidelity with Inés will be the reason he is kicked out of the house. There are also Rommel and Aníbal (sons of Próspero and Doralisa), Armando (veterinarian, who will be the new partner of Lily), Lieutenant Ocampo (institutional authority), José (Pedro's brother) and Jonás (a criminal), but the impact of these characters in the central story is lower. This paper focuses on four of the main characters that are old enough to pose a defined masculinity.

#### HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

The starting point of the study is that in some modern fiction stories the crisis of the patriarchal system is evidenced and, along that line, the representation of the male characters shows variations in respect to the patriarchal masculinity. These variations can be observed in a melodrama as *La reina de las carretillas* [Queen of pushcarts].

#### HYPOTHESIS

The male characters in the Peruvian miniseries *La reina de las carretillas* [Queen of pushcarts] are models of representation that differ the patriarchal masculinity.

This assumption leads to the following research questions

- What types of masculinities the Peruvian miniseries the *La reina de las carretillas* [Queen of pushcarts] display?
- How do these masculinities relate to patriarchal masculinity?

A method of qualitative work, focused on the analysis of characters, was used to answer these questions. Through a review of all of the released episodes of the series, the way in which the male characters are represented was examined, using a matrix that allowed identifying the forms of representation of the characters, their characterization and elements of masculinity. This matrix of analysis was carried out taking into consideration the proposal for character creation developed by Syd Field (2002), the analysis sheet proposed by Milly Buonanno in the work of the GEMMA observatory and the tab of analysis proposed by Elena Galán Fajardo (2006). Thus, the proposed matrix considers the following dimensions:

- Physical dimension: body, face, clothing, accessories used, age, and ethnicity. They are visible aspects of the character, its characterization from traits that are presented as "natural", and also cultural elements.
- Psychological dimension: past of the character, personality/temperament, and goals. These elements constitute the psychological field of the character, proposing objectives for its actions; they reflect the way in which it carries out actions and relate it with the formation that it has had socially in its life.
- Social dimension: professional world, private world, and use of time for leisure, social class, and marital status. They are the aspects that allow, on the one hand, to understand the degree of inclusion of the character in the work world (provider male level) and the development of his masculinity in the public sphere; on the other hand, it reflect its independent acting, their moments alone, and the use of their time out of their job duties.
- Sentimental dimension: sentimental relationships, family relationship, relationship with other men,



relationships with infants. This dimension locates the analysis at the sentimental level of the story and provides information about relationships between the genders, which can be of domination, support, confrontation, or subjugation. It also offers characteristics of the relationships with peers, which will reaffirm or call into question the masculinity of the character. The relationship with underage characters allows analyzing the sentimental level that reflects the way in which the male will relate to the paternal figure.

Each of the characters has been analyzed with the proposed matrix, and the focus has been given to more prominent and recurrent characteristics, in cases where variations from episode to episode have been observed. While in some instances certain categories failed to unfold properly given the insufficiency of

the information in the proposed narrative (e.g., on the past of some characters), the matrix was useful to show differences and similarities of each of the male characters.

#### ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS

For reasons of space, an outline of the matrix of analysis is presented - not the full development of the analysis - with the characteristics of the characters worked in this research.

#### THE MASCULINITIES PRESENT IN *LA REINA DE LAS CARRETILLAS* [QUEEN OF PUSHCARTS]

Drawn from the theory of gender and of the analysis, some representations of masculinity in *La reina de las carretillas* [Queen of pushcarts] can be outlined.

Table 1. Character: PEDRO

| Dimension     | PEDRO   |
|---------------|---|
| Physical      | 30 to 35 years.<br>Husky (pectorals).<br>Tidy ("good presence").<br>Medium grown beard, groomed.<br>Jeans and comfortable shoes, checkered shirts worn open and underneath, a sleeveless shirt (tank top called "bividi").<br>Thin leather choker.<br>In the Peruvian imaginary he is "white" <sup>2</sup> .  |
| Psychological | Sensitive.<br>Calm, although he can lose his self-control over an injustice.<br>Past: was in prison for robbery, was set free because of good behavior.<br>Trade: repairs electrical appliances.<br>He wants to move on without being judged by his past and win over Estrella, becoming his advocate   |
| Social        | Bachelor, only interested in Estrella.<br>Socio-economic class of little income.<br>Repairs electrical equipment at a market stall.<br>Leisure: a party or celebration at the market.<br>Youngest sibling, involved in a robbery where he took the blame.   |
| Sentimental   | When alone, he shows his sensitive side, he cries.<br>His attitude of responsibility of the weaker (his brother, Estrella) and sacrifice give heroic dimension.<br>Dimension of protective adult with Yazmin, (only girl in the story).<br>Takes care of the helpless, will defend them even with self-sacrifice.<br>Unique sentimental relationship with Estrella.<br>Relationship with male characters: variable with Kike (in first chapters they are against each other; later amicable, and certain complicity).<br>With Lázaro, constant confrontation.<br>In physical confrontations with other males he will be victorious. |

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 2. Character: LÁZARO

| Dimension     | LÁZARO   |
|---------------|--|
| Physical      | <p>30 to 35 years.</p> <p>At the beginning of the story, fisherman attire (rolled up pants, shirt). In Lima, trousers and jacket.</p> <p>Well combed hair and shaved, shows no accessories.</p> <p>"Average" body build.</p> <p>Ethnically can be placed as a coastal Peruvian criollo<sup>3</sup></p>   |
| Psychological | <p>His past from a family of fishermen is inferred.</p> <p>Violent, resentful and unhappy.</p> <p>Abusive with the weak.</p> <p>Against characters with greater power, he is cowardly.</p> <p>Irresponsible.</p> <p>His central objective will be to recover Estrella, have her come back home</p>   |
| Social        | <p>Married to Estrella.</p> <p>Unfaithful several times.</p> <p>Fisherman but fails to support his family.</p> <p>Socio-economic class of very low income.</p> <p>In Lima he has no known job.</p> <p>Leisure time: parties, other women, drinking.</p>  |
| Sentimental   | <p>He began the story married to Estrella. Then separated, with her demanding divorce.</p> <p>Father of Lucero, who will be a nuisance to him. He will neglect his daughter's needs, care and attention.</p> <p>Establishes a relationship - more sexual than sentimental - with Inés, becoming his most stable relationship during the story.</p> <p>Highly conflicted relationship: Inés is a powerful character that does not allow Lázaro to leave her or take decisions.</p> <p>At the end of the story, he will try to forcibly impose his wishes, which hastens his own death at the hands of Inés.</p> <p>Relationship with male characters: constant confrontation.</p> <p>At a physical level, the other male characters defeat him.</p> |

Source: Own elaboration.

#### CHARACTER: PEDRO – THE EGALITARIAN MAN

*It is assumed that the survival of the family group and of society as a whole depends on its efforts [of the male]. (Fuller, 2012, p. 127)*

The case of Pedro proposes a masculinity that has values recognized by the hegemonic masculinity. He is strong, hardworking, responsible, and cares for the honor of others. While Estrella is not part of his family for a good part of the story, he takes on the task of protecting her, watching over her, and tries to ensure her wellbeing. Fuller (1997) indicates that the paternity is the perfect manhood, a sign that he is no longer an immature chauvinist, but a man (p. 168). During the

story Pedro won't have children<sup>4</sup>, but is married to Estrella and becomes the father of the two girls raised by both (the daughter of Estrella and the one of Inés). Thus, he has the elements of balance and maturity that shape him as a father.

Despite this, the character is far from representing the patriarchal model since it lacks the elements that would make him the head of the family: his work does not allow him to be the family provider; he does not show his virility, since he does not conquest women or has sex with them, although he makes sure to establish that he is not homosexual ("I don't have a girlfriend or any commitment. But just in case, I don't wet the canoe



Table 3. Character: KIKE

| Dimension     | KIKE  |
|---------------|---|
| Physical      | 25 to 29 years.<br>Sun-browned, light features of mulatto, curly hair and rather messy.<br>Face is cared for, shaved and clean.<br>Average body built, physical ability because he does sports.<br>Informal wear, colorful shirt, worn open, sometimes only underwear.<br>Short leather necklace as an accessory.   |
| Psychological | Irresponsible and lazy.<br>He loses his job for falling asleep.<br>Past and objectives are unclear in the story.<br>Dedicated to having fun, without responsibilities.  |
| Social        | Husband of Lily at the beginning of the story. Infidelity breaks the marriage.<br>His capacity to provide is limited.<br>At the end: relationship with Susana, where she decides to not marry him.<br>Leisure: playing soccer, drinking, watching TV, spending his wife's money.  |
| Sentimental   | Without family, but with a desire to have it.<br>Starts the story married, and ultimately attempts to formalize a new relationship with marriage.<br>He wants to fulfill social mandates.<br>Relationship with male characters: amicable, behaves like a "bull", but in reality is a "chicken".<br>Faces Lázaro to achieve justice.<br>Relationship with children is friendly, but distant. |

Source: Own elaboration.

either"<sup>5</sup>, he says to Doralisa in Episode 4). However, in spite of the fact that his fidelity to Estrella is friendly mocked, it is also linked to being noble, the proper behavior of a "made" man. Similarly, Pedro does not exert power over Estrella, since their relationship is more horizontal and of support and understanding of their problems and needs. Even so, this will not be done without crisis and difficulties for him, as explicitly said in a conversation: "I'm tired of being the good one. I only do what she wants. I have to accept her will", to which Kike replies: "That is your role, you're her dummy, you have to do it. Plus, Estrella just chose you because you are like that, dull and nerdy", reaffirming the vision of the peers, where a man that is too good is seen as a fool, and egalitarian masculinity is belittled by other males.

At the end of the story, Estrella is the one who gains fame and becomes successful, and Pedro will work at her business in administrative duties. This type of relationship shows the representation of an egalitarian, democratic model. It is interesting to see that the main male character (although not the protagonist) embodies

this masculinity, that is the ideal to which society is pointing to in its official discourse. "An identity far away from the machismo emerges. The *new man*, the democratic, is who is going through various identity crises; debating between conventional roles and the alternative ones that it must now take"(Cruz & Ortega, 2007, p. 123).

#### CHARACTER: LÁZARO - THE CHAUVINIST MAN

*A man can be a loving father, a great mystic or a creative artist, but, even so, it has yet to provide evidence that it is productive.*  
(Fuller 1997, p. 130)

Lázaro is a married man who works and has a daughter, but entering the working world does not mean the condition of an adult. Lázaro is not a male provider; he can't sustain his family, which makes him an incomplete male subject. That does not prevent him from unfolding his virility with different women, and even having another daughter with Inés, of whom throughout the story is said that she is sterile.

Table 4. Character: PRÓSPERO

| Dimension     | PRÓSPERO   |
|---------------|--|
| Physical      | <p>40 to 45 years.</p> <p>Creole, mestizo from Lima.</p> <p>Overweight, flabby body, large cheeks, old-fashioned hairstyle.</p> <p>Sober clothing, shirt and sweater (cardigan) semi-open, as if he could not close it completely.</p> <p>Without accessories, use glasses that stress his round face.</p>   |
| Psychological | <p>Submissive.</p> <p>He had an education in accounting; has worked to provide for the family. He wants recognition, for his effort and work to be appreciated.</p> <p>Main objective: feeling loved.</p>  |
| Social        | <p>Married with Doralisa.</p> <p>Responsible for administrative and accounting procedures of the market.</p> <p>Middle socio-economic class.</p> <p>Desires to interact with women.</p> <p>He will be unfaithful, first with his sister-in-law and then with Inés.</p> <p>Leisure: with his children, watching television at home.</p>                                   |
| Sentimental   | <p>In the beginning, troubled relationship with his wife.</p> <p>Later has a relationship with his sister-in-law (who becomes pregnant).</p> <p>Finally, sexual relationship with Inés (who uses him).</p> <p>Father of two sons, who will appreciate him at the end of the story.</p> <p>Relationship with male characters: helpful, tries to be everyone's friend.</p> |

Source: Own elaboration.

However, Lázaro will care very little for his daughters, not wanting to take responsibility or deal with them. On the other hand, his physical strength is mainly used against women, as a reaffirmation of his domain. Lázaro not only shows dominance through violence, but also by controlling the actions of his wife, as when he forbids Estrella to go to the beach, “less so with that dress” (Episode 1). It has been already stated above how the urban working classes take with force the traditional model, and to what extent material insecurity and dependence from dominant groups set up gender relationships with an exacerbation of male dominance (Fuller, 2001, p. 40). Lázaro's reactions are typical features of the chauvinist man, the macho, who imposes its own rules through force and detachment to responsibility. However, in front of other men Lázaro shows weakness (he is defeated in several physical clashes) and his way to recover shows cowardice, so far consistent with what is proposed by Cruz and Ortega (2007): the chauvinist “is based on appearances: cowardice hides behind empty fanfare” (p. 136).

#### CHARACTER: KIKE – THE VIRILE MAN

*-Tell your husband to let you do your chores, and he should work every now and then. (Doralisa to Lily. Episode. 4)*

Kike shares some characteristics with Lázaro: a character that is not a provider, he has a job at the beginning of the story and then loses it, but does nothing to get another one. The irresponsible nature of Kike is displayed in the form that appeals to his manhood as an excuse to not work: “I am not for temp jobs, negrita – he tells Lily-. “I am the man of this house and I have to bring big bucks, not pennies” (Episode. 6). Kike appreciates his virility and boasts of it. When he excuses himself for being late to a meeting indicating that it was because he was having sex with his wife, Inés pays attention to him, believing him to be a good possibility for her to become pregnant. When they are about to be together for the first time, he says, “After me you will not want to be with anyone else” (Episode 6), highlighting his virility and sexual potency. However, this virility is not enough to give him the status of

hegemonic male, because it should be paired with other characteristics, absent in Kike. "Manhood must be accompanied by responsibility, otherwise he is a breeder, not an accomplished male" (Fuller 1997, p. 169). This half-way male animalizes the subject, thus representing the idea of the uncontrollable man, who cannot contain his instincts, as when Kike justified his infidelity with Inés saying to Pedro: "She put herself there, in a silver tray; one is only a man" (Episode 20).

Kike will try by all means to keep the power, despite his failure as a provider. Yet what his wife will not forgive will not be his inability to sustain, but his infidelity. When she kicks him out of the house, he apologizes and tells her that "I am a man, it was an affair, but I love you; I am sure she put something in my food" (Episode 22), justifying what gender construction denominates as the indomitable side of men.

Unlike Lázaro, however, Kike does care about his relationship, he understands the pain that he caused his partner by being unfaithful, and wishes to conform a true family, aiming to do so in the last episodes, when he proposes marriage to Susana, his new partner. Unfortunately for him, his previous image and the desires and aspirations of Susana play against him, and she rejects his proposal, although not the relationship between the two: "Do not think, you are not good at that. You are only useful for turning me on, kissing me, to give me feelings" she says (Episode 40). In this way, while Kike has many of the characteristics of the chauvinistic man, the absence of violence in him, his level of concern about his partner, his final wish to be established and the degree of power that he gives to his new partner, generate a different tone of masculinity, in a stance that seems eternally in transit between the young boy turning into a man, and the already fully formed male. Virility, both inside the home and outside it, will be one of its main features, so in the study characterized him as a virile man.

#### CHARACTER: PRÓSPERO – THE EMASCULATED MAN

*All Princes become pigs, or worse, in the invisible man: never there when you need him, (...) or is "in the clouds". (Episode 2)*

With these words Próspero is presented in the story, through what his wife says about him. From the beginning, even absent on the screen, Próspero reveals the mandates of masculinity and the crisis of it in the changing society. The character is built

with the characteristic features of the patriarchal model of a man; his source of masculinity is being head of the household, and his paternity (Cruz & Ortega, 2007, pp. 137-138). However, despite being father of two, married, and a business manager, he represents the emasculated man. The power that his wife Doralisa has in the family relationship and the business undermine the possibilities of Próspero to exert a dominant masculinity. He tries to take charge at home and in the business, but she is the one who has control and final decision on all matters, both domestic and public. "A man who fails in the attempt for his wife to recognize his final authority over her and on the family, loses its masculine condition" (Fuller 1997, p. 160). And this lost condition is seen by the different characters of the story. Inside the home, it is his children - especially Ánibal - who remind him on more than one occasion who has the power in the house: "Why are you upset? I bet my old lady already gave you a telling off" (Episode 8).

Próspero's situation is undermined publicly, as in several episodes Doralisa scolds him in the market for not doing things as they should be done or as she wishes. *You are no good for anything, you never do things right*, are phrases said loudly in front of everyone. Thus, the character appears as a precarious version of being male, which puts him in a subservient position to others (Fuller, 2012, p. 118). He will try along the story to shake out of this situation, and to confront Doralisa: "To you, you're the best mother, the best entrepreneur, best boss. And I'm sure you also think you are the best wife" (Episode 7), he tells Doralisa, who resents it, but does not make any changes. In another confrontation, he says: "I am your husband. I'm not a slave, and much less an employee of yours" (Episode 13).

These situations show a character that, even though he is in a position of diminished masculinity, tries to achieve a less asymmetrical relationship, and will end up trying to regain the privileges of a dominant masculinity. Fuller emphasizes the value of an active sexuality for masculinity and warns that if the female domesticates it, it can emasculate the male (Fuller, 2001, p. 124). "The natural axis of masculinity is virility, defined as the untamable aspect of masculinity" (Fuller, 2012, p. 123). This figure is what Próspero will develop in the middle part of the story. Obsessed with his sister-in-law, he will establish with her a relationship, which ends when his son Rommel discovers the romance. In

subsequent episodes he has an affair with Inés, who manipulates him by praising his virile and masculine side. Once Inés achieves her purposes and discards him, Prospero is exposed, rejected by his family, humiliated in front of everyone, guilty of the misfortune of his family and people of the market. Homeless, without work, without money, without friends or family, he stoops on the lowest step of masculinity, a subject diminished and scorned, dominated by a woman who has manipulated him and has taken advantage of his naivety. In his last appearance, only his son will grant him some value. When saying goodbye, because he has obtained a job in the North of Peru, he tells his family that they can now be happy, to which Rommel responds: “No, dad, we will miss you” (Episode 41). The final embrace with his children, while his wife gives her back to him, proposes a weakened character, but despite his mistakes is recognized as a doting father, who has planted some value in his male children to continue in life.

### FINAL REFLECTIONS

With a story featuring strong, empowered and independent women, *La reina de las carretillas* [Queen of pushcarts] depicts male characters that represent some of the different types of masculinities that exist in Peruvian society (egalitarian, chauvinistic [macho], virile, emasculated), all of them distant from the patriarchal masculinity. This estrangement is due, on the one hand, to the class situation of the characters, because nearly all have economic difficulties to maintain the family, which is one of the main characteristics of the male provider proposed by the patriarchal masculinity. Their reduced resources hinder them from achieving the masculine ideal, and therefore are placed in other types of masculinities. Then again, the strength of the female characters prevents them from fully exercising control over them.

Pedro represents a kind of masculinity that responds to the official discourse: an egalitarian man. The current proposal of the story goes, thusly, with political correctness, and locates the male co-star as a being who struggles between complying with the patriarchal mandates (provider, protector of the family) and a new society that gives a space and activity to women. In this way his representation is positive, and becomes a model to imitate.

Lázaro, as the antagonist, is the representation that must be rejected: that of the macho, the chauvinistic man. His lack of possibility to be the provider, his violent character, his domination over women as his only form of prestige, and above all, his detachment and lack of responsibility towards his offspring, make him a representation that goes against the current values, and therefore the character will be punished with death at the end of the story.

Kike shows one side that differs from machismo, moving away from violence and locating itself in the area of not being productive, with transit characteristic that do not allow him to move towards a “full manhood”. His final relationship with a woman who does not allow him to have the final say, undermines his sexist character and places him in what we propose as a model of virile man, ending also weakened against a woman who decides the future of both.

Finally, Prospero represents the emasculated male but in constant desire to shake off from that situation, and thus approach a more classical patriarchal model. However, he will fail in this attempt and will end in an even more disadvantageous situation than in the beginning.

Hereof, we can glimpse a story proposal where, facing the crisis of the patriarchal model, those who try to return to it fail, either dying, failing to dominate their partners or being banished from the story. Only the one who moves away from the patriarchal model and approaches a more egalitarian relationship has a truly happy ending.

### FOOTNOTES

1. This very way of defining it shows how the hegemonic masculinity model underlies, since if the man must “facilitate” the rights of women, it is because he is the one who still holds power over women.
2. The actor who plays him is the son of a renowned Peruvian film director and screenwriter, from a rich family.
3. Peruvians would call him “blancón” [“whitish”] due to having a lighter skin color than the national average.
4. The final episode shows the story ten years later and the marriage of Pedro and Estrella has not resulted in children, but she announces that she is pregnant.
5. Referring to the vallenato “Se le moja la canoa” [Wets the canoe] from the Colombian musical group Los Embajadores Vallenatos [The Vallenato Ambassadors].

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