BECOMING UNBECOMING: GRAPHIC NOVEL, GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND RESISTANCE[1]

Desconstruindo Una: graphic novel, violência de gênero e resistência

Martha Júlia Martins de SOUZA
Universidade Federal de Roraima
marthajumartins@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1547-827X

Tradução de Eduardo Aluísio de Gang FABRO
Universidade Federal do Paraná
eduardo.a.g.fabro@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4308-5588

ABSTRACT: *Becoming Unbecoming* is an autobiographical graphic novel about Una – from childhood until adulthood. Una suffered gender violence during her youth and struggled to overcome trauma and raise her own family. Nowadays she is using her art to raise awareness about gender-based violence. At the present work, graphic novel is understood as social practice (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989; 2006) since there is a two-way relationship between the texts produced in society and the social and political context in its surroundings. The graphic novel under analysis creates, reinforces and spreads an important awareness discourse on gender violence and its naturalization, physical and subjective forms of violence and blaming of the victim, topics relevant to feminist studies even today. In this sense, the present work reflects upon matters related to gender violence under the perspective of Gender Studies and Critical Discourse Analysis. Investigating how language is used in the construction of this goal means challenging power and oppression relations that are still present in the contemporary world.
KEYWORDS: Gender-based violence; Graphic novel; Language; Social Practice.

RESUMO: O presente artigo traz uma reflexão sobre questões que envolvam violência contra mulher à luz dos Estudos de Gênero Social e da Análise Crítica do Discurso. Para isso, utiliza-se a *graphic novel* autobiográfica *Desconstruindo Una*. No presente trabalho, *graphic novel* é

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compreendida como prática social (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989; 2006), uma vez que existe uma relação bidirecional entre os textos produzidos em sociedade e o contexto social e político em seu entorno. Investigar como a linguagem é usada na construção desse objetivo significa desafiar as relações de poder e opressão tão presentes ainda no mundo contemporâneo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Graphic novel; Linguagem; Prática Social; Violência de Gênero.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the autobiography *Becoming Unbecoming*, we follow the life of Una, from her childhood to her adulthood. Una is the graphic novelist's fictional name for herself and the protagonist of the story, which portraits a series of gender-based violence perpetuated against women in a country of the UK between the late 1970s and early 1980s. Una is the main character and narrator of the story, but it is also equivalent to the feeling of unity and solidarity, which must unite all women who have or have not suffered gender-based violence.

As Una herself makes clear, this is a graphic novel "to all the others," since Una means one or one of many other lives. By playing with the meaning of the word Una and the semantic weight of being one of many abused women, she brings to the narrative an even greater weight, as it intertwines the plot with the research field of social gender studies − a theoretical-methodological space founded on women's claims.

In *Becoming Unbecoming*, as in social gender studies, the analysis of the issue of violence against women is conducted in light of the deconstruction of the idea, often associated with masculinity and femininity norms. That's how, from the perspective of gender studies, it is understood that gender violence, unlike other forms of violence, does not refer to a problem of alterity and annihilation of the other. On the contrary, violence against women concerns mainly gender inequalities, power hierarchies, and inequalities between men and women that begin in the family and the domestic sphere (BANDEIRA, 2019).

The storyline of *Becoming Unbecoming* follows two main axes. The first one deals with the series of murders committed in West Yorkshire, England, by a man who was only arrested after 30 years of his first crime. The second one deals with the physical and psychological violence that the protagonist went through after being raped and suffering her personal trauma silently for years. In this way, the two axes are divided into: (i) chronological order of the facts, and (ii) Una's personal perception about the facts witnessed/suffered by her. The plot also brings the years of family neglect suffered by the

narrator due to her mother's alcoholism and the ill-treatment that her mother suffered. In other words, the narrative focuses on the various forms of violence perpetrated against women from Una's point of view.

The central question of the story revolves around the guilt of sexually abused girls and women, which comes from their families, the justice system or society as a whole, and that serves as a beacon for the entire graphic novel – it is in line with the feminist studies' perspective about the condition of women in the contemporary world, and therefore, will drive the discussion of this article. In this sense, clothing items are important elements of the narrative, because part of the common-sense discourse blames women who are raped for dressing in a way that facilitates or incites abuse. Other than that, cursing and insults against women who do not fit the expected standards are explored throughout the narrative.

Una's main concern seems to be to refute the idea of guilt that falls on women's moral. The moment when the character reflects about loose morals is emblematic, because it makes us notice the reverberation of hierarchical relations between men and women. Thus, Una tells us: "what are loose morals? Going out alone at night, drinking. Going to the pub without your husband, going to the pub with your husband, having a history of mental illness" (UNA, 2016, p. 64).

Una opposes the idea that women should be permanently questioned at the same time she disagrees with the moral assumption that exonerates men based on the sole and exclusive fact that they are men. The repertoire of cursing and aggression does not go unnoticed by the protagonist, who absorbs and analyzes everything. It is interesting to note how Una shows she does not understand how her mother can be judged for having had a child before marriage (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: UNA'S MOTHER
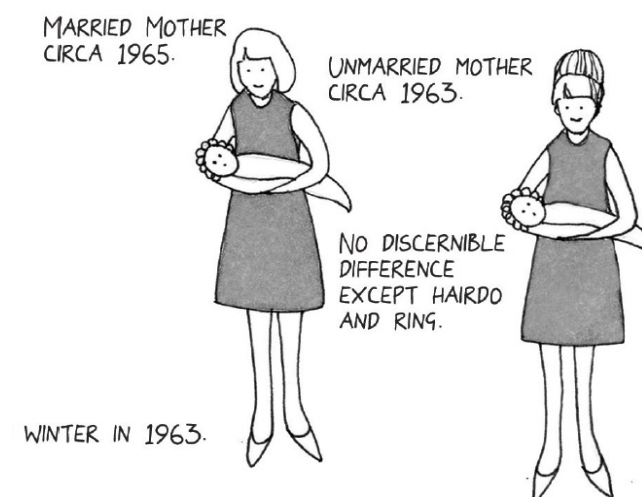
SOURCE: Una (2016, p. 17)[2].

Una shows that the judgment directed at her mother has standards that are merely moral and imposed by a patriarchal thinking previously agreed-upon by a sexist and traditional logic that regulates women, and that does not necessarily reflect changes in her mother as an individual or citizen. It is important to highlight that the theme developed in the graphic novel is not about victimization, as it may seem to common sense discourse, but aims to "highlight that the expressive concentration of this type of violence is historically imposed on female bodies and that violent relationships exist because asymmetrical power relations permeate people's daily lives" (BANDEIRA, 2019, p. 295).

Graphic novels, as textual genres, are similar to comic books, however, they are more often published in single book format; as standalone stories, they are usually longer and have a beginning, middle and end, and they are sold in the market for higher values than conventional comics because are printed on higher quality paper. Unlike comic books, graphic novels are not published periodically and rarely require sequels.

As a discursive event, a graphic novel can be characterized as a social practice that has a dialectical relationship with institutions and the social structure as a whole; it is expected that the values and beliefs spread by these social practices are propagated

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[2] Picture text: Married mother circa 1965. Unmarried mother circa 1963. No discernible difference except hairdo and ring.

through oral, written or sign language or imagery, thus contributing to form ideologically charged knowledge and value systems – for good or ill (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989, 2006).

A graphic novel that is concerned with bringing unresolved issues of prejudice and abuse against female bodies provides reflection on the conditions to which many women are subjected even today and demonstrates how these difficulties need to be overcome in today's society. Using *Becoming Unbecoming* as a background for a more complex reflection on gender leads to what Potts and Brown (2005) call "research as resistance", that is, a form of political intervention against injustice and oppression which promotes, in this case, social change through the unraveling of language. The purpose of this text is not to analyze the graphic novel as a literary work, nor as a semiotic resource, but to use the discursive system of values and beliefs used in *Becoming Unbecoming* as a backdrop to raise a discussion about gender violence perpetrated against women from the perspective of social gender studies.

The first part of this article brings a brief introduction that contextualizes *Becoming Unbecoming* within a gender perspective, which fosters the reflection on feminist discourse and gender-based violence in the graphic novel. The second part establishes some theoretical precepts of Critical Discourse Analysis, on which the present article is based, to develop the relationship between gender-based violence and language. The third part presents a reflection on gender-based violence, bringing some comics to illustrate the way the theme was used as the main thread of the narrative. In the last part we bring some final considerations about *Becoming Unbecoming* in light of social gender studies.

2. GRAPHIC NOVEL AS A DISCURSIVE SOCIAL PRACTICE TO COMBAT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Certain discourses can be represented in many ways and present various configurations that are shaped according to the context, location, and situation in which the text is produced. Some aspects such as writing style and discursive organization as well as imagery choices help to compose the discourse. For Fairclough (2006, p. 118-119) "discourse types differ not only in the way in which they represent discourse, but also in the types of discourse they represent and the functions of discourse in the representing text". Fairclough also believes that elements such as the commodification of society, fostered by the increasing expansion of capitalism and consumption, cause considerable changes in the order of discourse, generating numerous "dilemmas for text producers and interpreters trying to work out ways of accommodating, containing or subverting colonization" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2006, p. 117).

In this regard, deconstructing the character Una means, largely, deconstructing a series of stereotypes built over the years about women's lives that directly influence the construction of the idea of representation that one wants to give to women today. A graphic novel such as *Becoming Unbecoming* gradually becomes a factor for social change, since it questions the traditional way of making comics – mostly written and illustrated by men, about male heroes, with narratives that hypersexualize women and naturalize gender violence and aggression.

Talking about and for a group as vulnerable as sexually abused women means giving visibility to a problem that needs to be treated with a collective awareness of both men and women, because "although not all men engage in violence or approve it, in contemporary Western patriarchal societies the hegemonic, or dominant, model of masculinity is misogynistic and aggressive" (FIGUEIREDO, 2006, p. 209).

For Fairclough, the change in the order of discourse that has been progressively taking place is related to three main trends: democratization, commodification, and technologization of discourse. In the present article, the aspect related to the democratization of discourse will be observed, especially with regard to access to prestigious and non-prestigious discourses and the elimination of what Fairclough (2006, p. 203) calls "overt markers of hierarchy and power asymmetry" linked mainly to the formal register of language. In this sense, a graphic novel, of easy language, associated with sensitive illustration has an important role in the democratization, formation, and awareness of a reading public.

Sensitive and visceral, *Becoming Unbecoming* spreads the idea that the language used by abusers, the judicial system, family members, and society is a major producer of gender inequalities and, therefore, needs to be shaped in order to help combat these violations against women. Una understands that the anonymity of the internet encourages abusers and misogynists in general to continue to perpetrate verbal acts of violence against women, while enables these women, in return, to organize themselves against violence, humiliation and rejection.

Thus, "the digital revolution is a solution as well as a problem" (UNA, 2016, p. 117). In other words, recognizing language as the viable means for fighting and combating abuse is as important as understanding that language is part of the flame that provokes such forms of violence. For discourse analysts, fighting language that offends and humiliates is as important as recognizing it. For Fairclough, the struggle remains, even if democratizing good gendered discursive practices is not a "smooth and universal

process, gender asymmetries in discourse have been denaturalized and problematized on a significant scale" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2006, p. 207).

Being aware of discourses of violence and the naturalization of this violence is the first effective step to combat misogynistic and prejudiced discourse. The second step is to oppose to the discourse of violence and spread a discourse that promotes equality. Fairclough states that intervention can take many forms, ranging from fighting for women's access to discursive practices and prestigious venues – such as departmental or union meetings –, to simple interventions opposing violent and misogynistic writing. It is also possible to encourage non-aggressive and non-obscene male interventions, going against common sense judgments that assume that men can only interact in crude and violent discursive practices.

Any interventions in the bubble of discrimination, violence, and prejudice always cause discomfort and interest from certain conservative sectors in maintaining the *status quo*. For Fairclough:

> Questions of intervention are a timely reminder that abstract tendencies such as democratization are the summation of contradictory struggles, within which interventions to restructure orders of discourse may be resisted in various ways, and may be subjected to various strategies of containment, in order to preserve existing hegemonies in the sphere of discourse (FAIRCLOUGH, 2006, p. 206).

Interfering in this bubble means being aware of the malicious discourse and promoting good practices of discursive coexistence in society, because by changing the language we promote large-scale social change, since language is a part of the society and not an element external to it. For Michael Halliday, in his Systemic Functional Linguistics (2004), the text is at the same time a unit of meaning and a form of social interaction, which means that a text (comics, graphic novels, books, maps, WhatsApp messages) "can be analyzed in terms of language as a system (a set of lexical-grammatical elements) and as a semiotic element that reflects discursive and sociocultural processes linked to social structures" (MEURER, 2005, p. 90). In this sense, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis emphasizes the need to seek in the texts the implicit textual elements that reflect what happens in the social structure.

One of the reasons why meanings of social practices are constantly implicit in texts is due to what Fairclough calls the naturalization of discursive realities, that is:

> The notion of naturalization is associated with that of opacity. It means that discursively created "realities" come to be perceived as something

> natural, unchanging, part of their very nature. Once a certain perspective becomes naturalized, it becomes "legitimate", subliminal, and difficult to deconstruct. Take, for example, a sexist perception of man or woman. Such perception responds to meanings considered "natural", correct, that are "just like that" (MEURER, 2005, p. 91).

In the same way that naturalizing discourses of violence would generate more discourses of violence, following the same logic, naturalizing discourses of tolerance and respect would generate more acceptability and equality. Thus, analyzing the language of that graphic novel giving visibility to the discourse of empowerment and support for other women helps to understand how forms of power and oppression are exercised in the world and how they can be mitigated and combated.

The ideologically charged sexist discourse is widespread and accepted in many spheres of society because it has been established for years as a morally accepted discourse, either because we constantly face impunity for gender crimes or because agents of the State themselves disrespect women with aggressive and sexist discourses – and neither them or the State suffer any punishment or reprimand. In these cases, the message is clear to society: we tolerate gender-based violence and accept the patriarchal sexist discourse. To change the social structure, it is necessary to work on the discourse that permeates it.

For Fairclough:

> Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations. Practices which appear to be universal and commonsensical can often be shown to originate in the dominant class or the dominant bloc, and to have become naturalized. Where types of practice, and in many cases types of discourse, function in this way to sustain unequal power relations, I shall say they are functioning ideologically (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989, p. 33).

The author is also assertive when he says that oppression and power are legitimized through coercion or consent; and consent is largely the result of prejudiced and discriminatory discourses that society does not reject, does not fight, but accepts. The most effective way to rule without coercion is via consent, through the propagation of ideology, and discourse plays a key role in this situation. The so-called relations of power are the clash between ideological forces that propagate and are in favor of gender violence.

Fairclough states that such relations are not reduced to economic issues, regarding social class, as some may think, but go through other segments, such as power relations between different ethnic groups, economically different countries, older and younger people, different institutions or men and women. It is important to emphasize that this relationship is always of struggle, oppression, and hierarchies (FAIRCLOUGH, 1989).

In addition to the main goal of uncovering the injustices that permeate the discourse, the discourse analyst must be aware of his or her social commitment to choosing to do research with the explicit and political intent of combating social injustices that belittle certain groups in society, such as combating gender-based violence. Using tools that empower women and propagate an ideologically charged discourse of representativeness can be instrumental in educating young readers, college students, and academics, interweaving gender issues and giving voice to a collective and real pain. Choosing to analyze *Becoming Unbecoming* means choosing to do research of an anti-oppressive nature, that means "choosing to do research and support research that challenges the status quo in its processes as well as its outcomes. It seeks to resist oppression embedded in ourselves, our work, and our world" (POTTS; BROWN, 2005, p. 260).

3. "I AM NOT A SLUT": GUILT AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

When Una talks about her maturing process, it is possible to observe that her knowledge about gender issues did not emerge from nowhere but is part of a process of self-knowledge through social interactions and her life in society. In other words, Una understood that knowledge and experience over the years have set her free (Figure 2). The author uses the graphic novel to inform other women about what gender-based violence is and how this knowledge is liberating. For her, "hindsight is a marvellous thing" (UNA, 2016, p. 46).

FIGURE 2: HINDSIGHT IS A MARVELLOUS THING
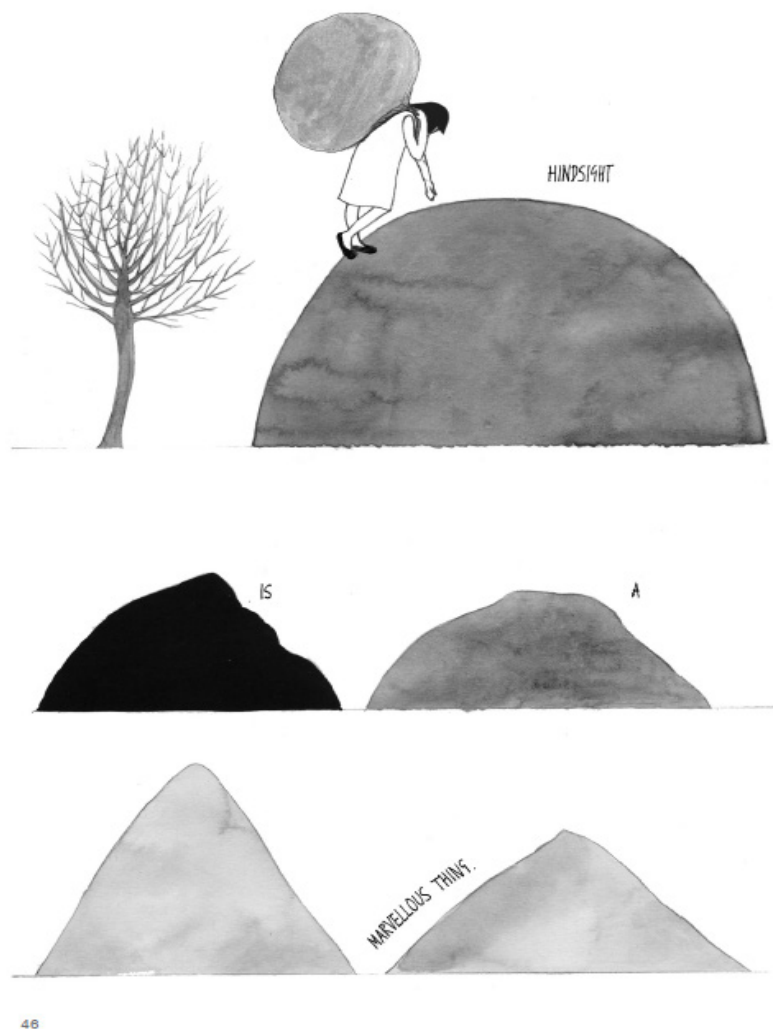
SOURCE: Una (2016, p. 46)[3].

The character realized the importance of dealing with the discourse, cursing, and verbal aggression that incapacitated her after understanding what is gender-based violence and how it affects women in the most diverse ways. In this sense, Una says: "sometimes, you can't see the wood for the trees" (UNA, 2016, p. 158). Una is always portrayed as someone who carries the weight of emotions and who walks with difficulty on the hills of life, which metaphorically represent the difficulty of locomotion, of climbing while

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[3] Picture text: Hindsight is a marvellous thing.

carrying a difficult emotional load. After transposing the barriers of trauma and prejudice it is possible to visualize the forest, the trees, as the result of this journey (Figure 2).

Una, as many real-life women, does not notice the signs of violence in the first moment. Her special "relationship" with her attacker was not one of affection, but of abuse. The delay in understanding is related not only to the fact that the protagonist does not maintain a dialogue channel with her family and does not have enough experience and knowledge to understand everything that was happening, but also because there are no official and safe channels to support women who suffer violence. The loneliness imposed on those who suffer abuse, Una concludes, charges a price on women's emotional lives. In this sense, Bandeira tells us that "the interpersonal relationships of coexistence in private and family places are the proper place for the installation and potentiation of violence against women" (BANDEIRA, 2019, p. 303), since they are cemented by layers of naturalization of relations of oppression and power.

More than that, "the incident with Damian was thoroughly buried" (UNA, 2016, p. 25). Damian, her abuser, comes out unscathed in the narrative and in real life. Trapped in emotions, that are carried in the form of baggage, Una is silent in the face of everyday episodes of violence. It is possible to see that her silence has the connivance and encouragement of her mother (Figure 3), who represents a collective desire of society to silence women victims of gender violence. The conformism of the situation is expressed in "that was just the way it was". The banality of the scene contrasts with the weight of Una's emotions represented in the hills and the emotional baggage that the character always seems to carry.

FIGURE 3: BURIED INCIDENT
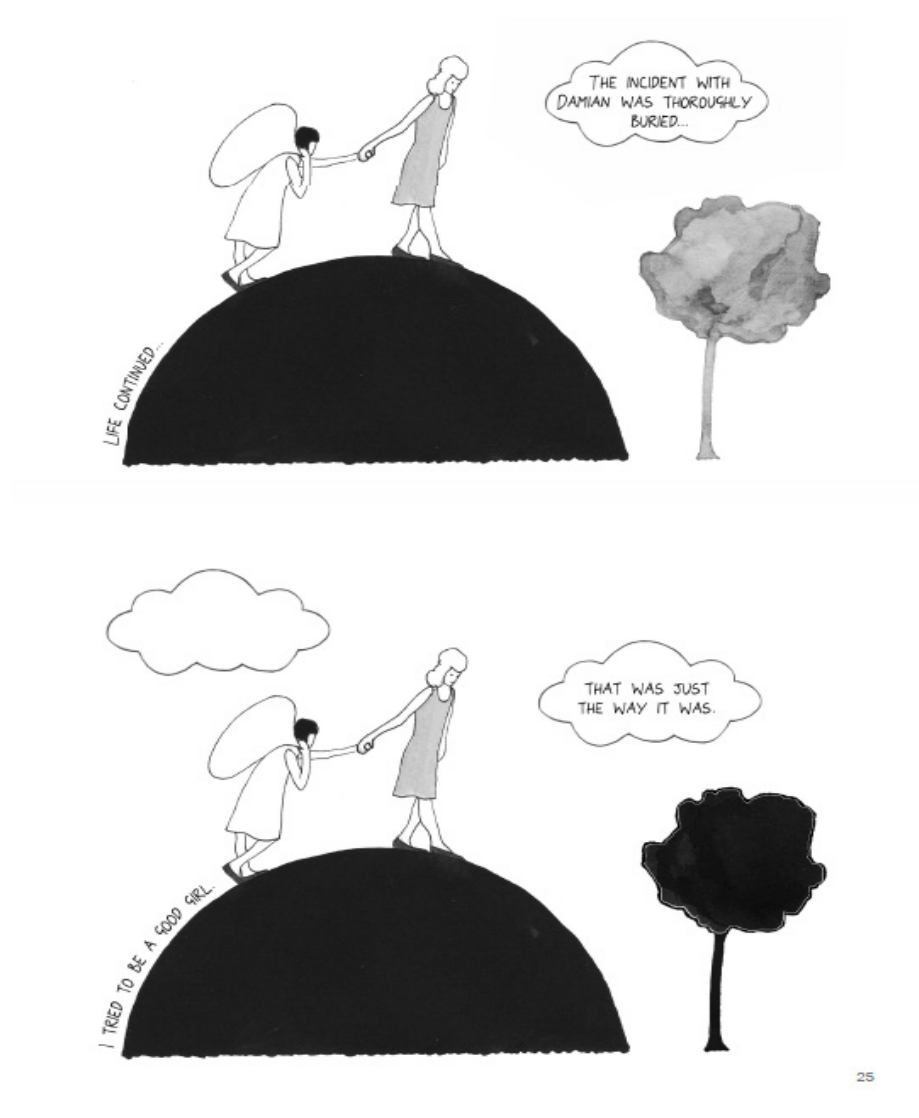
SOURCE: Una (2016, p. 25)[4].

According to Figueiredo (2006, p. 201), a specialist in language and gender studies, "rape is still a crime surrounded by an aura of secrecy, probably because it involves, from the victim's point of view, feelings such as shame, guilt, fear and pain (fear of police and legal treatment, public exposure, loss of reputation and social status)". This is attested by Una herself, who not only finds it difficult to understand her own vulnerability, but also

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[4] Picture text: Life continued… The incident with Damian was thoroughly buried… I tried to be a good girl... That was just the way it was.

has to deal with complete indifference to what had happened. The difficulty in dealing with her own emotions becomes clear when she says "words failed me. They didn't present such a problem to others!" (UNA, 2016, p. 79).

Una realizes that the swearing was continuous, and the judgments were always hasty – both from the police system that believed that the women victims of the West Yorkshire Ripper were prostitutes, and from society that passed a series of judgments against sexually abused women. As a consequence of this, Una became "an unreliable witness and a perfect victim" (UNA, 2016, p. 82).

It is interesting to mention that in the same period in which the story takes place, in 1975, the first United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women was held in Mexico, declaring that the following ten years after the Conference would be the decade dedicated to women. Ironically, in the following years, more victims of the West Yorkshire Ripper emerged in a clear mismatch between the world's policies to protect women and what was actually happening in everyday life in the countries. Even if we take a country in the Global North as example (SANTOS, 2018), such as England, it is important to note that gender inequality and violence are problems on a global scale, as they concern power hierarchies and gender issues, thus affecting women in diverse contexts.

As aforementioned, the story of Una follows two lines of narrative: the first one presents the events in a linear time sequence showing the facts as they happened; the second one shows Una's emotions, reflections and analyses arising from this chronological period exposed in the graphic novel. The whole narrative shows that not only the bodies of women and girls are punished based on an implicit code of morality that determines how they should behave, dress, relate to their own bodies and with their male counterpart, but also completely ignores the responsibility of men who punish female bodies by creating rules of morality that only benefit men. The victim-blaming from the point of view of social gender studies is related to power relation and control of women's bodies by the male counterpart. According to Figueiredo:

> By saying that rape is an act of abuse of power I am not claiming that there is not a sexual element to this crime. What I mean is that the sexual connotation of sex crimes is distinct from the notion of sex shared by most of us. Feminist thinkers and researchers agree that at the core of rape are violence and the desire for domination [...]. If we could point to the genesis of sexual aggression, it would probably be in the existence of unequal power positions between people (men and women, adults and children, black and white, rich and poor, etc.) (FIGUEIREDO, 2006, p. 205-206).

The same control that requires domination of female bodies imposes sanctions on them, so that they are punished if they do not follow the imposed behavioral standards. The punishment for girls who do not behave well, who do not dress well, who go out drinking in pubs, who have an active sex life, as Una describes, is abuse. In the end, the narrative that is constructed establishes that nothing bad happens to good girls who behave well, according to what is morally accepted by this society. We can return to Una's line in Figure 3 – "I tried to be a good girl" (UNA, 2016, p. 25) – to understand that the concepts good and bad are underestimated in contexts of violence.

In *Becoming Unbecoming* it is clear that girls begin to be judged at an early age – "once, in class, I drew a picture of a boy I fancied. The teacher liked it and displayed it in the corridor [...]. I was so embarrassed!" (UNA, 2016, p. 27). In addition to being laughed at, Una was ignored by the boy who was the object of her affection. Showing desire or taking the initiative is considered an inappropriate behavior for girls, even for adolescents of relationship age.

The guilt of the female being goes beyond the daily judgment of interpersonal relationships between boys and girls, men and women – it also reaches the legal sphere. For Figueiredo (2006, p. 207) "some researchers in the field of feminist criminology believe that the legal discourse constructs the female body as sick, hysterical and immoral". In other words, there is a whole identity construction that expects a specific configuration of female behavior, whether in the family, professional, legal, or religious sphere, and this expectation meets the demands of patriarchy as it creates norms for female bodies.

Thinking about the female body from this patriarchal code brings to the graphic novel some very pertinent reflections; the first of them is connected to Una's reputation. By realizing that she was guilty of something that she herself had not asked to happen, Una begins to understand the idea of reputation and how it directly and exclusively affects her own life and the lives of other women. The construction of female identity around reputation is beyond her control, because reputation is not something constructed exclusively by the woman herself; it is something that depends on external factors.

Una realizes that a woman's reputation is fabricated based on sexist values decided by a dominant group. Moreover, there is a linguistic repertoire built up over the years that serves the purpose of blaming, tarnishing, discrediting, and humiliating the woman's figure. In Figure 4, Una discovers that she should take care of something called reputation; something she didn't even know well and had already lost. It is quite emblematic that Una's reputation is represented by a dark smoke that hangs over her head and slowly slides down the drain in front of her while she seems perplexed.

FIGURE 4: REPUTATION

SOURCE: Una (2016, p. 51)[5].

Furthermore, the graphic novel makes some effort to show that appearances can be deceiving, behavioral patterns are socially constructed, swearing at women does not change their personality at all. Calling a woman a slut, as we see in the graphic novel, will not immediately turn her into one, although it will cause irreversible psychological damage to her since it serves the purpose of diminishing, rejecting, and offending.

It is also important to point out that all prejudice begins in discourse, is expressed through discourse, and returns to society through discourse.

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[5] Picture text: This is how I found out I had something called a reputation that I was supposed to have been looking after. I didn't even get a good look at it before it was gone.

As Figueiredo states:

> In the context of rape, for example, sociologist Diana Scully (1990) investigated the "vocabulary" of motives presented by convicted rapists, that is, the linguistic resources used by rapists to interpret, explain their acts and make them socially and culturally acceptable […]. Scully identified two types of offenders: those who admitted and those who denied the act. Admitted offenders used different excuses in an attempt to explain why, although their behavior could be defined as "rape," they were not rapists. The deniers, on the other hand, admitted that rape is generally unacceptable, but argued that in their particular case there were justifications that made their behavior appropriate, even correct […]. Scully concluded that the mastery of a certain vocabulary seems to be essential for a man to learn to accept, justify and perform a rape (FIGUEIREDO, 2006, p. 209).

Apparently, we live under a veil of gender equality and protection of women. This veil is false, since it is still possible to quantify violence against women, which is hidden under various pretexts, but actually starts from the same sexist assumptions that judge female morality by organizing around the same traditional patriarchal standards of masculinity and femininity (BANDEIRA, 2019).

4. SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As narrated by Una, few women report the cases of abuse they have suffered. This is largely due to fear of judgment and the feeling of impunity and discrediting of the competent authorities. By making the complaint, the victims begin to represent social roles not always desired by the victims, fruit of the construction of an identity that blames women and exonerates men. Liebes-Plesner (1984 *apud* FIGUEREDO, 2006) argues that the behavioral stereotypes (sexual and social) of women, related to rape cases, can be compared to myths and folk tales, since they carry a moralizing tone with a learning background and lesson for society rather than a concrete solution for the abuse cases.

Moreover, to ensure effective discourse change in society, it is necessary to redefine and reconstruct discursive ideas about individuals. Only in this way, Fairclough assures, will it be possible to achieve social and cultural change, for it is in this way that "societies categorize and build identities for their members […]" and that "power relations are imposed and exercised, as societies are reproduced and changed" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2006, p. 168).

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More than that, working toward discursive change requires democratizing discourse, which Fairclough understands as "the removal of inequalities and asymmetries in the discursive and linguistic rights, obligations and prestige of groups of people" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2006, p. 201). On this path, *Becoming Unbecoming*, with its discourse of empowerment and alert for other women, strengthens the discursive identity construction more egalitarian for women while promoting the reduction of gender violence, and the graphic novel textual genre itself has a primary function of awareness as a more accessible means of dissemination of the precepts of social gender studies and of combatting gender violence.

As Potts and Brown (2005, p. 261) suggest, "recognizing that knowledge is socially constructed means understanding that knowledge doesn't exist "out there" but is embedded in people and the power relations between us", *i.e.*, *Becoming Unbecoming* and deconstructing unequal gender relations strengthens the understanding that the more knowledge about what social gender is, what feminism is, and how these relations favor the promotion of equality in society, the more we will move toward effective societal change.

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