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ABSTRACT

This project examines the stereotypes and gender dynamics related to meat consumption that are communicated in meat advertisements in Switzerland from 2012 to 2023. The aim of this thesis is to recognise how advertising texts promote gender attitudes related to meat consumption through a critical media analysis based on ecofeminist and gender performativity theory and performed through a semiotic analysis. The analysis showed that the televised promotion of meat relies on values belonging to hegemonic masculinity, such as the suppression of emotions and the devaluation of activities considered feminine. Furthermore, meat and the consumption of it is presented as a social instrument to acquire virility, sexual prowess and attractiveness for men. Swiss meat advertising promote an image of men as experts in buying and preparing meat - especially in the social context of barbecues - using images that sexualise the female body alongside meat. Women are presented as marginal elements within the advertisements, thus reinforcing the idea that meat is a male consumer object.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieses Projekt untersucht die Stereotypen und Geschlechterdynamiken im Zusammenhang mit dem Fleischkonsum, die in der Schweizer Fleischwerbung von 2012 bis 2023 kommuniziert werden. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, zu erkennen, wie Werbetexte geschlechtsspezifische Einstellungen in Bezug auf den Fleischkonsum fördern, und zwar durch eine kritische Medienanalyse, die auf ökofeministischer und Gender-Performativitätstheorie basiert und durch eine semiotische Analyse durchgeführt wird. Die Analyse hat gezeigt, dass die Fernsehwerbung für Fleisch auf Werten beruht, die zur hegemonialen Männlichkeit gehören, wie die Unterdrückung von Emotionen und die Abwertung von Tätigkeiten, die als weiblich betrachtet werden. Darüber hinaus werden Fleisch und sein Verzehr als soziales Instrument zum Erwerb von Männlichkeit, sexueller Leistungsfähigkeit und Attraktivität für Männer dargestellt. In der Schweizer Fleischwerbung wird das Bild des Mannes als Experte für den Kauf und die Zubereitung von Fleisch - insbesondere im sozialen Kontext von Barbecues - durch Bilder gefördert, die neben dem Fleisch auch den weiblichen Körper sexualisieren. Frauen werden in der Werbung als Randerscheinung dargestellt und verstärken so die Vorstellung, dass Fleisch ein männliches Konsumobjekt ist.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Contextualising Switzerland from the perspective of a Swiss Black Feminist Vegan Woman..	5
1.1.1 On the Swiss Far Right and its Approach to Meat	5
1.1.2 The Swiss far-right's Narrative on Gender and Women.....	7
1.2 Relevance	8
1.3 Positionality and reflexivity	11
2. Research Design.....	13
2.1 Research Questions.....	13
2.2 Objectives and Hypothesis	14
2.3 Corpus.....	15
2.4 Intersectionality.....	16
2.5 The Complex Relationship Between the Individual, Images and Culture	16
2.6 Method	19
2.7 Semiology.....	21
2.7.1 Identify Signs and Signifiers	22
2.7.2 Find Signified Meaning(s).....	22
2.7.3 Distinction between Denotation and Connotation.....	22
2.7.4 Analysis and Limitations.....	22
2.8 Mise en Scène.....	23
3. Theoretical Framework	24
3.1 Gender	25
3.1.1 Gender Performativity	25
3.1.2 Hegemonic Masculinity.....	26
3.2 Sexuality.....	30
3.2.1 Heteronormativity.....	30
3.2.2 Ecofeminism	32
4. Approaching Meat	34
4.1 Carnism	36
4.2 Meat Definition: What is Meat?.....	37
4.3 Production (or Transformation)	39
4.4 Consumption and Preparation	42
5. Maintaining and Restoring Hegemonic Masculinity Through Meat	44

5.1	Emotional Detachment	45
5.1.1	Spear(s)ed Hearts.....	46
5.1.2	Men don't cry.....	48
5.2	Competitiveness	51
5.2.1	No one does it like I do	51
5.2.2	The Working Man.....	52
5.3	Engaging in Feminine-Labelled Activities.....	54
5.3.1	Barbie Men.....	55
5.3.1	Painful Waxing	56
5.3.1	Zumba	57
5.3.2	Avoiding Competition	59
6.	<i>Sexist meat framing and male sexual prowess</i>	60
6.1.1	Massaging meat.....	62
6.1.2	Soft and Juicy	64
6.1.3	When Men Know 'Their Meat'	65
6.1.4	Women, Keep Your Hands Off the Grill!	68
6.1.5	More is More.....	72
6.1.6	(Un)Sustainable Women	77
6.2	Male Sexual Prowess and Veganism.....	80
6.2.1	"Meat never did it for me"	81
6.2.2	My Girlfriend Thinks I'm a Vegetarian	84
6.2.3	Vegan Queerness	84
Conclusion		85
References		90

Table of figures

<u>Figure 1</u> - Bag of coal hitting and suggesting men to "go back to the grill"	47
<u>Figure 2</u> - Man wearing pink shirt and singing Britney Spears animatedly	48
<u>Figure 3</u> - Man smiling satisfied as he turns the meat on the grill	49
<u>Figure 4</u> - Workers being unsatisfied with their small lunch.....	53
<u>Figure 5</u> - Workers being happy for their gained access to meat.....	53
<u>Figure 6</u> - Woman looking at a man in disbelief for selecting the Barbie Song from the juke box	56
<u>Figure 7</u> - Man being violently hit by a bag of coal with the quote "Men, go back to the grill" written on it.....	57
<u>Figure 8</u> - Military boy being laughed at by his roommates for receiving a Barbie doll.....	59
<u>Figure 9</u> - Man looking at the woman provocative way as he massages a steak.....	62
<u>Figure 10</u> - Close-up of the man's hand massaging the steak.....	63
<u>Figure 11</u> - Woman laying down and looking at the men massaging the meat provocatively.....	63
<u>Figure 12</u> - Middle aged woman looks at a young butcher admiringly as a younger woman standing next to her looks surprised.....	67
<u>Figure 13</u> - Man with an unnerved expression because his partner spices the meat.....	69
<u>Figure 14</u> - Man reprimands a woman who is grilling because in his opinion she does not have enough experience.....	71
<u>Figure 15</u> - man looking at the steak with admiration as he spices it up.....	74
<u>Figure 16</u> - Man is obsessed by the idea of having a barbecue.....	76
<u>Figure 17</u> - Smiling woman points to all the sustainable fish in the display case.....	79
<u>Figure 18</u> - Darko serves the aubergine to the girls who look at him with admiration.....	81
<u>Figure 19</u> - Group of girls greets Darko with a displeased look while some of them are holding raw vegetables.....	83

1. Introduction

1.1 Contextualising Switzerland from the perspective of a Swiss Black Feminist Vegan Woman

Before discussing the particularities of Swiss meat advertisements, the socio-political context of Switzerland over the last fifteen years will be introduced. I will give an overview of the Swiss context from a critical, feminist point of view by analysing the political and cultural attitudes towards meat and women.

1.1.1 On the Swiss Far Right and its Approach to Meat

Currently, the far-right Swiss People's Party (SVP) is the majoritarian party in the Federal Assembly¹, with a 28% of seats compared to the 18% of the left oppositional party Soziale Partei (SP). The parliamentary elections results in October 2023 increased the shift towards the right with more votes for the SVP at the detriment of the Green Party (CH, 2023). These political results must be taken seriously because they give an indication of how a large section of the population is positioned regarding politically relevant issues from 10 years ago until now such as the environment, women's issues, minorities, and in general concern for the most vulnerable, which in this case are the animals.

Meat has increasingly become a global political issue. This trend can also be observed in Switzerland. On the 25th of September 2022, the Swiss population was called to the polls to vote on the initiative calling for the abolition of mass livestock farming and the protection of the dignity of livestock (admin, 2022). The proposal was put forward by anti-speciesism and animal welfare associations and called for cattle, poultry, and pigs to be subject to the same standards as animals processed into organic meat. The animals would have been able to benefit from outdoor space as well as more indoor surfaces, since the initiative also demanded a reduction in the number of animals allowed in a barn. The initiative was rejected by the Swiss

¹ The Swiss Federal Assembly is composed of the National Council and the Council of State. The first consists of 200 members that are elected by the Swiss population every four years. The number of deputies for every canton, is proportional to the size of its population. The Council of State, which is composed of 46 members, represents the Swiss cantons, of which every canton has two representatives (independently from their population size) that are also elected by popular vote every four years. (Admin, n.d)

people with 62.9% disapproval. Understanding the arguments and the nature of the opposition is important to understand the cultural attitudes favouring the meat market in Switzerland.

In August 2022, young members of the SVP, tried to demonstrate to the population what would happen – in their opinion – if the above-mentioned initiative against intensive farming was accepted. They did this through a TikTok video in which a girl and a boy in their mid-twenties visited the Coop supermarket of the central station in Bern where they emptied the entire meat counter. Their motto was “If you accept the livestock initiative, we will be left with expensive organic meat and mass-produced meat from abroad.” (Junge SVP Schweiz, 2022). This campaign video cost them 1880 Swiss Francs and when the president of the Young SVP was interviewed about it, he said “So, did you like it? We had a blast!” (Trachsel quoted in Blick, 2022). However, despite having had a good time, their arguments are weak and non-factual. The initiative was in fact demanding that meat imports from abroad would also be reduced, leaving mainly organic meat in the supermarket’s shelves (Massentierhaltung Initiative, n.d).

SVP Zürich state councillor Martin Haab, in turn, commented on the initiative in an article on the official SVP website. Already in the title the initiative is referred to as “harmful and unnecessary” (Haab, 2022). In the councillor’s eyes, it would cause an increase in meat prices, a reduction in regional production in favour of foreign imports, and a restriction on the freedom of choice of the consumer who could only buy organic meat. These counter arguments are mainly supported by the claim that in Switzerland there are no such things as intensive farming, and most importantly that such farming practices only exist abroad. Ultimately, Haab (2022) concludes the article with another peculiar argument which is much more ideological: “The aim [of the initiative] is not animal welfare but media hype about the climate and the re-education of the public. They want the Swiss to reduce their meat consumption by 70%, supposedly to ‘save the global climate’, by means of this state-imposed restricted menu.”. Haab’s colleague Marcel Dettling from the Schwyz State Council brings the same arguments in an interview, but when asked about the numbers showing a reduction in meat consumption observed in Switzerland since 1980, and whether farmers are taking this into account he replied:

The media try to spread the image of a country where people only eat vegan or vegetarian food, but the opposite is true. Meat is still popular, and that's logical. In Switzerland, 70% of the land is grassland. That's where we need ruminants. They transform grass into meat and milk and feed people. It's a perfectly closed circle, and that's wonderful for Switzerland. And the Swiss love meat. (Dettling quoted in Swissinfo, 2022)

The arguments put forward by the councillor appeal first and foremost to a devaluation of the media as a means of propaganda for a diet free of animal products. Furthermore, he refers to the natural and necessary cycle that meat consumption supports and without which Switzerland would be in trouble. It is crucial to consider this stance of the Swiss right in favour of Swiss meat consumption because as explored through this research project, this notion of naturalness and normality is often promoted in Swiss advertisement centring meat.

1.1.2 The Swiss far-right's Narrative on Gender and Women

Like in other European countries, right-wing discourse in Switzerland has shifted from being anti-feminist to being anti-gender (Maihofer & Schutzbacher, 2015). These discourses particularly target the study of gender and the terminologies that developed from the field. The devaluation of gender theory to an ideology is therefore also a current reality in Switzerland. In recent years, the SVP party has variously attacked feminist movements by repeatedly demanding that equality offices as well as shelters for women victims of violence be dismantled. The party also opposed the integration of female historical figures into the compulsory school curriculum. Even on the issue of abortion, the party regards this fundamental reproductive right as a private matter and one that should be financed by women and not by insurance companies (Maihofer & Schutzbacher, 2015). Despite this, there are SVP party members who regard the SVP as the political faction that best safeguards women's interests. In fact, in 2016, when SVP vice-president Oskar Freysinger was asked whether a more women-oriented policy was needed, he stated that:

There is no need for a policy for women, because women do not have specific needs, but a policy for people. The SVP's policy is more women-friendly than any other because it is the only party that consistently combats foreign criminality, which often affects women. (Freysinger quoted in Watson 2016)

A few years earlier SVP member Ueli Maurer, and president of the council in office from 2013 to 2019 states that "How many second-hand items that are 30 years old do you still have at home? There aren't many left in our house, except of course for the wife who does the housework." (Maurer quoted in Watson, 2016). This statement was made in the context of a vote concerning the purchase of new war material, which was then rejected by the Swiss voters.

To sum up, the view of women and their role in society, as well as on meat consumption promoted by the SVP party are tied to outdated values that protect neither the safety nor the dignity of women, animals and the environment.

1.2 Relevance

In this section, I discuss the relevance of my research from an environmental and gender equality standpoint. I then outline why analysing visual advertisements reproducing gender stereotypes associated with meat consumption and preparation can be socially and culturally relevant in order to understand and redirect the Western discourse around meat and its consumption.

The global population has been alerted by scientists for decades about the worrying state of the Earth's climate. Our way of producing and consuming is "slowly" destroying our planet and its natural resources. Food in today's societies is a social agent and is "used by people to interact with one another and establish social connections" (Costa et al., 2019, p.1). Studies have also shown the impact that different foods can have on the climate, which allows to question our food consumption and eventually change it. Meat and

dairy production and consumption have been proven to have devastating effects on the environment and on climate change. Particularly, scientists have voiced numerous concerns over the current meat production and consumption (Willett et al., 2019). In fact, studies are making it irrefutable that reducing one's individual meat intake is one of the most effective actions to enhance environmental sustainability (Wynes & Nicholas, 2017). Scientists at Oxford University demonstrated in 2018 that switching to a vegan diet is the single biggest impact that an individual can have on climate change (Poore and Nemecek, 2018).

Several studies have shown the historical and current gender gap in the consumption of meat products as well as in the choice of following a vegan diet. Men tend to consume more meat than women, and the latter are more likely to embrace a meat-free diet (Boek et al., 2012, Modlinska et al., 2020, Sumpter K.C., 2015, Ritzel & Mann, 2021). Regardless of race (Boek et al., 2012) or the age of consumers (Ritzel & Mann, 2021), this gendered gap between men and women, seems to always be reproduced when it comes to meat and animal products intake. Ritzel & Mann (2021) shed light on the fact that this gap is persistent among numerous nations even though the approach to meat in said countries is inherently different (p.2). Despite alerts from the scientific community, meat is still widely consumed across the globe. Piazza et al., (2015) explain this with the concept of the “meat paradox”. It describes the tendency to resist or rationalise meat intake through the “4Ns”, namely that eating meat is “Natural, Normal, Necessary and Nice” (p.1). Understanding how societal and cultural values depicted in meat advertising can have an impact on the decision to consume animal products, is essential in order to bring awareness to and question the normative nature of such values.

Many humanities and social sciences scholars have also studied the potential link between masculinity and meat consumption or vegetarianism and veganism. Sumpter (2015) for instance, finds that “the more meat an individual eats, the more masculine the individual will be perceived.” (p.104). Accordingly, this affects the perception of a person that only consumes plant products. It is not unusual to hear the quote “real men eat meat” (De Backer et al., 2020, p.1) and it is also observed that women and men tend to have a different

attitude towards meat. Most studies show that this is particularly accurate when the elements of virility and sexuality associated with red meat are considered (Nath, 2011).

The examination of gender roles in relation to meat advertising is particularly effective since earlier and present research underlines how advertising of all types actively reproduces gender stereotypes (Bergstorm et al., 2021). Accordingly, stereotypical images in advertising demand a critical approach since they can influence a person's impression, social interactions and societal perceptions of women and men (Windels, 2016). As Gamson et al. (1992) claim in their review article on "Media Images and the Social Construct of Reality": "An advertisement, for example, may be intended merely to sell cigarettes to women, but incidentally it may encode a message about gender relations and what it means to be a 'woman'." (p.374). The same logic can be applied to meat advertising, which tends to be crafted for a masculine public and therefore promotes very specific gender relations and behaviours.

The meat advertisement scene in particular is the subject of heated debates worldwide. For instance, in the Dutch city of Haarlem advertisements about meat will be banned from 2024 onwards to reduce its consumption and consequently control greenhouse gas emissions. In the Swiss context, independent organisations as well as panels of experts are trying to move in the same direction (Radiotelevisione Svizzera Italiana, 2023). More specifically, the Swiss national section of the international environmental organisation Greenpeace launched a petition to the Swiss authorities demanding that state subsidies for meat promotion be stopped. In fact, in Switzerland meat producers still receive state funding from taxpayers to produce and promote their 'products'. In addition to defunding, Greenpeace also stipulates that advertisements about meat and other animal products be banned from Swiss territory, suggesting that they promote a fictitious reality and imagery of animal products production (Greenpeace, 2022).

The role of advertising is still significant in our society, and it is therefore worth subjecting it to a critical analysis when it comes to matters such as meat consumption, which is closely tied to the wellbeing of our planet and the animals.

1.3 Positionality and reflexivity

In this section, I address my personal position as a critic of meat adverts in Switzerland. I reflect on the effect that my perspective has on the knowledge produced, on the relation between me and the material I deal with and the social effects of my critical work as suggested by Rose (2001, p.130). It is important to note that I approach my specificity and unique subjectivity as a positive opportunity for multiple different perspectives to emerge, rather than as a problem or limitation (Finlay & Gough, 2003). Moreover, positionality and reflexivity are crucial to avoid falling into the “universality trap” of academic knowledge and to recognise that this type of knowledge too is situated and partial (Rose, 2001, p.130).

When looking at images with a critical objective it is essential to reflect on the standpoint which we are looking from and to also reflect on the knowledge that we have and how this affects the outcome of a research project (Warwick, 2022). Since our ways of seeing are “historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific” (Rose, 2001, p.16) they can never be fully objective. Finlay and Gough (2003) broadly explored the topic of reflexivity from a research perspective and define it “as thoughtful, self-aware analysis of the intersubjective dynamics between researcher and the researched. Reflexivity requires critical self-reflection of the ways in which the researchers’ social background, assumptions, positioning, and behaviour affect the research process.” (p.ix). Thus, as the researcher, I consider myself an integral part of the research, on which I recognise I will have an impact in terms of results (Finlay & Gough, 2003, p.ix).

I am a Black, able-bodied, (eco)feminist, vegan Swiss woman.

I was born and raised in the Italian-speaking canton of Switzerland Ticino, from a Swiss mother and an Angolan father. Growing up in this extremely white context in the early 2000s definitely had a big effect on my worldview. From an early age, I was aware that the world does not show the same kindness to everyone. I quickly learned to recognize my privileges as a Swiss citizen, which is why I have always been interested in understanding and studying inequality and injustice, in the hope of one day being able to do my part to reduce or end them.

Today I am in my mid-twenties and for more than three years I have excluded foods of animal origin from my diet. Although I am not an animal lover, and in the past, was a great meat lover, I adopted this choice when I realised that all types of oppression are connected, and that the people who suffer and will suffer the most for our food choices are those belonging to the global south, especially women. Over time I have developed the belief that animal exploitation will be one of those issues for which future generations will criticise us strongly. I have learned to recognize animals as unique individuals with personalities that must be respected. In my view, in our privileged Western context, eating meat makes no sense because it is no longer a product that we need to survive. Ultimately, I see a possibility for the abolition of all oppressions in the liberation of animals.

For the sake of transparency, it is fair to say that I do not support meat advertising because I believe it promotes a system of violence. As a vegan person, I am opposed to the promotion of animal products and generally believe that the meat industry has more negative aspects than positive ones. Animal welfare, disastrous working conditions in meat processing plants and the environmental impact of meat are only a few of those aspects that I briefly mention in my research. The debate about meat consumption is one that certainly moves me emotionally. There is certainly a sense of hopelessness that arises when faced with our Western mode of consumption that seems to be so deeply instilled and engrained in our societies and cultures.

In the first stages of researching the topic of meat from a gender perspective, it became clear that much of my analysis would approach the topic through a critique of manliness and masculinity. Intuitively, this might create friction given my perspective as a Black vegan (eco)feminist woman that openly criticises patriarchal structures and behaviours. This has to be weighed when considering the impact that my perspective has on the knowledge produced.

2. Research Design

This thesis observes and critiques Swiss television (TV) advertising centred on meat consumption. Through the close reading of Swiss TV commercials advertising meat, I discuss gender dynamics and stereotypes leveraged by Swiss meat sellers. This project allows me to question the mainstream portrayal of carnism, and thereby vice versa via its absence also that of veganism, from a Swiss perspective and how and in what way it is closely connected to gender expectations and assumptions. I argue that Swiss meat vendors embrace gender stereotypes connected to meat consumption to communicate to a specific target audience in order to influence its consumption patterns. Additionally, I suggest that Swiss meat advertising operates with crafty promotion techniques that fully omit the consequences that meat production and consumption has on the environment and the animals.

2.1 Research Questions

To explore the topic of gender stereotypes in meat advertising in Switzerland, the following research question has been conceptualised to guide this project:

How does the portrayal of carnism² in Swiss televised advertising from 2012 to 2023 contribute to the gendering of meat consumption?

Given the ample and intricate nature of the topic, additional research sub-questions have been included. This thesis addresses a total of three sub research questions which aim to emphasise the topics of gender roles, sexuality, animals and the environment in connection to meat consumption and promotion:

- 1. How are gender roles performed in Swiss televised meat advertising from 2012 to 2023, especially with regards to the preparation and consumption of meat?*
- 2. How do Swiss televised meat advertisements promote a heteronormative ideal of meat consumption?*

² Refer to the definition of carnism in chapter 4.1. “Carnism” on pp. 40–41 of this thesis.

3. *How are animal rights and the environment or climate impact portrayed in Swiss televised advertisements about meat?*

2.2 Objectives and Hypothesis

The main objective of this project is to offer a critically reflective reading of meat adverts aired on Swiss TV. TV advertising is a type of text that is not necessarily thoroughly analysed by the average consumer due to its fleeting nature. Through my research, I hope to contribute to a new perspective on visual texts promoting meat and possibly challenge the discourse around them. For the sake of gender equality, this research can provide a better understanding of the areas in which gender scripts and expectations are still in place, and consequently give space to rethinking gender roles in relation to meat consumption. Most importantly, in the hands of marketers, this research can offer a better understanding of the gendered framing of meat consumption in the Swiss context.

Ultimately, this research aims at reframing the topic of meat consumption by questioning the dominant discourse around it from a gender and cultural studies perspective. Accordingly, the formulation of my main research question intentionally addresses that carnism, along with other types of consumption, can be seen as a gendered type of food consumption, especially when referring to the Global North (De Backer et al., 2020; Rosenfeld et al., 2021; Adams, 2010; Sumpter, 2015). However, whether and how the gendering of meat intake is also promoted or reinforced by Swiss meat sellers still needs exploring.

My hypothesis is that televised advertising of meat in Switzerland from 2012 to 2023 actively embraces gendered narratives around meat preparation and consumption in order to address their message to a specific target audience and further incentivize an already rich demand. In other words, I believe that Swiss advertisements on meat want to communicate to a precise part of the population while using familiar gender dynamics in relation to meat preparation and consumption, so that the consumer can identify and feel justified in their consumption.

2.3 Corpus

Switzerland, like other small European countries, has a relatively small-scale supermarket competition scene, with the two most popular ones being Coop AG (Coop)³ and Migros⁴. Additionally, meat producer Bell Schweiz AG (Bell)⁵ has also been selected, since it is one of the big producers of meat in Switzerland and promotes its products on TV. Bell products mainly fill the shelves of Coop supermarket among others.

The visual texts from the above-mentioned corporations have been accessed through the official YouTube channels of supermarket Migros and Coop as well as meat producer and supplier Bell. In fact, these companies publish some of their past and present campaigns on their YouTube channels. In total, my corpus consists of 21 primary sources. All are visual promotional texts considered relevant to my research question. In order to assess the pertinence of the advertisements, the following criteria were given particular importance:

Interaction

All the selected TV spots about meat have one or more people that interact with each other on the topic of meat, or which directly interact with the meat itself. Even if this criterion might appear obvious, it is not. In fact, all of the short meat advertisements that only included the meat and its price in front of a green screen were not considered.

Gender display

Some TV spots more than others display clear gender roles and stereotypes, while others require a closer reading and exploration, as well as a more conscious understanding. For this project, priority has been given

³ Coop was founded in the canton of Glarus in 1864 by the manufacturer Jean Jenny-Ryffel, who created the first Swiss consumer cooperative in that year. Today Coop operates in the retail and wholesale trade on an international scale and has more than 1000 stores on Swiss soil (Coop, n.d). It is therefore the historical direct competitor of Migros.

⁴ Migros was founded in 1925 and today it is an association of Migros cooperatives with ten affiliated regional cooperatives. (Migros, n.d) Migros counts the largest supermarket chain in Switzerland with over 600 large stores. Like Coop, Migros is a cooperative with two million members (Lapper, 2023).

⁵ The company was founded in 1869 by Samuel Bell. Today Bell is one of the leaders in the Swiss food market and is involved in the sale of meat, poultry, delicatessen and seafood products (Bell, n.d)

to visual texts that contain overt displays of gender performance, in order to deepen the understanding of it in conjunction with meat as a cultural and consumption object.

In order to compartmentalise the corpus of this research, I divide the visual texts in two thematic categories that allow me to conduct a topic based, rather than a producer-based analysis. The material revealed repeating patterns, symbols, and underlying messages which made the categorisation simpler. The categories are the following:

1. Restoring and maintaining hegemonic masculinity through meat
2. Sexist meat framing and sexualising women

2.4 Intersectionality

Moreover, this study follows an intersectional approach. The concept was developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in a legal studies context but is now being used as a powerful tool for social equality. As stated by Collins, “As opposed to examine gender, race, class, and nation, as separate systems of oppression, intersectionality explores how these systems mutually construct one another” (Collins, 1998, p.63). Christensen and Jensen (2014) suggest that this approach can provide a theoretical and ideological frame for “[a]nalyzing the complexity of differences and inequalities between men as well as between men and women.” (p.68). Operating with an intersectional perspective allows me to take into consideration and recognise that gender intersects with other social categories such as class, race, disability, sexuality and age. This is essential for understanding how the portrayal of meat in Swiss advertisements differs according to specific intersecting identity markers.

2.5 The Complex Relationship Between the Individual, Images and Culture

In order to justify the method of this research I believe it essential to first explore why I look at advertisements to research the social and cultural construction of gender in relation to meat consumption,

production, preparation, and distribution in Swiss TV advertisements about meat. Jamaican-born British sociologist Stuart Hall has devoted extensive research to the understanding of popular culture and is considered to be among the founders of Cultural Studies in Britain. Hall describes culture as a continuous “production and exchange of meanings” among individuals in a society or in a group. Hence, culture is strictly dependent on society’s members’ interpretations of their surroundings and on their way of “‘making sense’ of the world” (Hall, 1997, p.2). Rose provides (2001) us with a sociocultural definition of “meaning”:

[...] meanings may be explicit or implicit, conscious or unconscious, they may be felt as truth or as fantasy, science or common sense; and they may be conveyed through everyday speech, elaborate rhetoric, high art, TV soap operas, dreams, movies or muzak; and different groups in a society will make sense of the world in different ways. Whatever form they take, these made meanings, or representations, structure the way people behave – the way you and I behave – in our everyday lives” (p. 6).

Our daily experience is crowded by still or moving images to the point that images are essential in the construction of culture, and vice versa. Hence, many scholars have suggested that “the visual” has an essential role to play in the “cultural construction of social life in contemporary Western societies” (Rose, 2001, p.6). The specification “Western” societies is particularly important in this context. In fact, culture theorist Martin Jay has developed the concept of “scopic regimes” to describe the different ways of seeing that can exist and that are influenced by culture among other factors (Jay, 1993). Similarly to the concept of the “scopic regimes” another important distinction is made in cultural studies between vision and visuality: the first refers to what humans with sight ability can see, visuality on the other hand, is used to describe “the way in which vision is constructed in various ways: “how we see, how we are able, allowed, or made to see, and how we see this seeing and the unseeing therein” (Foster, 1988, p.ix). In other words, the way we look at things and how we perceive them is highly influenced by our culture, which allows us to question the normative nature of what we see and recognise that all “seeing” is mediated by context and culture.

Undoubtedly, still and moving images, in whatever format they might be presented, with the aim of selling a product are pervasive in Western societies. Williamson (1978) claimed that one of the most dominant and “influential ideological forms in contemporary capitalist societies is advertising” (Williamson, 1978 quoted in Rose, 2001, p.70). This is particularly true, she argues, since advertisements are “ubiquitous and thus appear autonomous” (Rose, 2001, p.70). As a consequence, we tend to take the complex social suppositions contained in adverts for granted, failing to recognise them as a “sphere of ideology” (Goldman, 1992, p.1). Welsh socialist writer and academic Raymond Williams (1960) describes adverts as being the art that results from a capitalist system which operates in a

[...] cultural pattern in which the objects are not enough but must be [...]. The short description of the pattern we have is magic: a highly organised and professional system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally very similar to magical systems in simpler societies. (p. 27).

When referring to magic, Williams (1960) is alluding to the fact that the messages that are conveyed are deceptive and aim to conceal the problems that exist in our society. On this magic he further states:

You do not only buy an object: you buy social respect, discrimination, health, beauty, success, power to control your environment. The magic obscures the real sources of general satisfaction because their discovery would involve radical change in the whole common way of life. (p. 29).

In the context of meat advertising, “magic” is used to conceal and omit animal suffering, environmental consequences for the environment, and the disastrous working conditions to which workers are subjected. Adverts serve the purpose of conveying signs that should describe good taste, character or for example masculine qualities. In this sense, ads not only give a meaning to the product, but also to whoever decides to buy it and the social reality that we are sharing with the product, while also socialising the consumer into a consumption-based culture (Zakia & Nadine, 1987, p.6). The main purpose of advertising is to convey an underlying message with political, social, or cultural significance. While doing this, it alters and omits any alternative messages, allowing to craft a reality that appears to be unquestionable and normal rather than a

singular interpretation (Bignell, 2002, p.24). Through this process an ideology is created and maintained in order to give an unquestioned meaning to the things that surround us by constructing them as ‘the norm’. Therefore, the risk of ideology is that it “goes-without-saying” and can be abused (Barthes, 1972, p.10) by those controlling the narrative.

Not surprisingly, the best way to establish or to leave an ideology unchanged is by creating myths. The term “myth” was first conceptualised by Roland Barthes in 1957. He was a French literary theorist and semiotician and argued that the “myth is a type of speech” and a language and thus has a signification (Barthes, 1972, pp.107-8). The challenge when analysing myths from a semiotics perspective is to recognise when the object is being communicated as a “social and political message about the world. The message always involves the distortion or forgetting of alternative messages, so that myth appears to be simply true, rather than one of a number of different possible messages.” (Bignell, 2002, p.21).

In the context of meat advertisements there is a large number of ideological “truths” and myths that are communicated. For instance, one myth among others that is still present in our society and therefore reflected in advertisements is that “real men eat meat” (De Backer et al., 2020; Rosenfeld et al., 2021). The case studies will show how Swiss TV advertisements on meat promote this ideological and cultural myth among others.

2.6 Method

I undertake the interpretation of the corpus with semiotics and *mise en scène* tools to ultimately find an answer to the research question “How does the portrayal of carnism in Swiss televised advertisements from 2012 to 2023 contribute to the gendering of meat consumption and veganism?”.

This chapter offers an overview of the methods and data analysis procedure. I will explain why I argue that the chosen method best suits the research question and describe in detail how the data described in the corpus chapter has been treated in order to draw conclusions.

In order to analyse the collected material, I undertake a semiotic analysis paired with a critical media analysis. In practice, this means conducting a close reading of the TV advertisements in order to recognize signs and significations among other semiotic categories later explained. This will allow me to describe the cultural and social construction of meat in relation to gender. The analysis is conducted in three main steps.

First, a close reading of the televised spots is undertaken in order to describe them. To accomplish this, terminology, and tools from “mise en scène analysis” (Gibbs, 2002) are employed, which are described and explained in the next chapter section. In availing myself of mise en scène terminology first, I draft a technical and content description of every piece of visual advertisement of the corpus. Through the description of the images, signs, symbols, and recurring patterns can be recognised and analysed with a semiotic analysis. As Bignell (2002) stated, signs in advertisements often also carry “meanings” and “connotations” (p.32) which stem from our culture. Some of these signs can be recognised easily, while others are not consciously recognisable and thus require an intentional effort to detect them. In practice this meant examining each TV advertisement in detail multiple times in order to describe the signs it presented. After observing these signs, I connect them to social myths and symbols about gender and meat present in our social reality (Bignell, 2002). My claims will be supported by ecofeminist and gender performativity theory.

Secondly, I classify the corpus of this project in two different categories corresponding to the patterns and underlying messages that emerged from the mise en scène description. The categories that organise the corpus are the following:

1. Restoring and maintaining hegemonic masculinity through meat
2. Sexualising meat and sexualising women

Despite the categories being created, it is problematic to assign some of the visual material to one exclusive category. This is because some of the implicit meanings and signs that I believe the ads communicate are

simultaneously present across different meat ads. Therefore, some of the observations that are made in one specific analysis chapter can be valid for other categories or visual materials selected.

In the third stage of the analysis, I question what the “ideological function of the meaning might be” (Bignell, 2002, p.34). This stage corresponds with the semiotic analysis and its interpretation, whose detailed steps are explained in the chapter on semiology. The questions that will lead this part of the analysis are: How does the portrayal of meat and gender performance in each ad resonate with our understanding of our world and society? And since possessing a product means to purchase the myths that its advertisement is trying to convey, what are the social values linked to meat consumption and gender in Switzerland? (Bignell, 2002)

2.7 Semiology

To study the visual material of the corpus I apply the structure and terminology provided by the discipline of semiology (Zakia & Nadin, 1987). Considering that all branches of semiology are interested in the making of meaning, it can be put in motion as an approach that can be used to analyse various formats of visual materials (Bignell, 2002). I employ semiology as an analytical tool to dismantle the illusory autonomy of adverts, in order to acknowledge their ideological nature (Bignell, 2002). Analysing ads with a semiotic approach is coherent with the aim of this project since, as stated by Zakia & Nadin (1987), “advertising is the modern substitute for myth and ritual and, directly or indirectly, it uses semiotics (the science of signs) to invest products with meaning for a culture whose dominant focus is consumption.” (p.4).

To undertake a semiotic analysis of televised commercials I examine the signs, meanings and symbols that are conveyed through the ads. This allows me to interpret the underlying values that are shared with the audience. In the next paragraph, I explain the steps that I executed for the semiotic analysis.

2.7.1 Identify Signs and Signifiers

The visual texts are collected and organised into thematic categories and a mise en scène analysis is performed in order to recognise the compositional choices of the videos. I understand elements of mise en scène to also be important signs and signifiers that serve the purpose of communicating something to the audience. At this stage, each advertisement is taken apart in order to detect and describe other signs and signifiers, which can involve objects, people, gestures, text, visual elements, effects and sounds among others.

2.7.2 Find Signified Meaning(s)

At this point the underlying message signified meaning of the ads is explored by considering the social and cultural context of the ads. The meanings will be interpreted from an ecofeminist standpoint with the support of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. At this stage signs conveying cultural values, myths, and ideologies through implicit or explicit messages will be detected.

2.7.3 Distinction between Denotation and Connotation

I then proceed to distinguish the explicit meaning (denotation) and the underlying or symbolic and cultural message (connotation) of the ads. This step will allow me to understand the deeper message that the sellers consciously or unconsciously communicate to their audience.

2.7.4 Analysis and Limitations

After organising my findings and observations in a sorted table I present a cohesive analysis that includes my interpretations, observations and arguments. I will support my analysis and my conclusion with examples extracted from the advertisements and the theoretical framework of ecofeminism paired with the theory of gender performativity.

However, there can be limitations to semiology. To illustrate these limitations, we have to first go back to the topic of ideology, it is important to note that any form of knowledge criticising a pattern of social

organisation should always be recognised as ideological (Hodge and Kress, 1991). This implies that “the critical goals of semiology are just as ideological as the adverts or whatever is being critiqued; the difference between them is in the social effects of the knowledge each depends on, not its truth status” (Rose, 2001, p.71-2). There is also the aspect of “double exposure” as described by Bal (1996), which is an inevitable result when writing about whatever text. In the analysis of a video, for example, double exposure can operate as follows: “not only is the video interpreted and exposed to interpretation; the interpretation is also on display, exposing the critic's ideas to interpretation by others” (Rose, 2001, p.72). Williamson’s early analysis of advertisements recognised that there is a “centrality of gender to how adverts are constructed” (Williamson in Rose, 2001, p. 72). More recently, semiological studies are also highlighting that the construction of class, gender, race and able-bodiedness should be explored when observing social differences (Rose, 2001).

2.8 Mise en Scène

Mise en scène, which literally translates to “put on stage”, is a term used to describe the composition and organisation of moving images. This involves the props, spatial arrangements, time representation as well as sound and narrative structure (Rose, 2001, p.77). In other words, mise en scène represents all of the artistic choices made by the director of a movie as to what to shoot and how to do so. Mise en scène elements that will be particularly relevant for my analysis are the following :

Setting and location - Here I consider where the story of the ad takes place and how this can be meaningful from a social and cultural perspective. The guiding question to describe the setting and location will be: Where are the actors of the ad and what or who is surrounding them?

Lighting - Here I describe how lighting plays a specific role in highlighting certain elements instead of others. I therefore answer the question: what are the first elements that the viewers eyes are directed to?

Costume and appearance - In other words: what are the actors wearing or not wearing and what does it communicate about their role in the advertisement?

Movement - I look at how the actors behave, move and express themselves. How does their body language and their facial expressions communicate certain emotions? How and why do these emotions shift throughout the ad?

Sound - Here I discuss how the sound accompanying the images has a great impact on the message that is conveyed. Sounds also include the narrator voice that does not correspond with that of the actors.

3. Theoretical Framework

Just like meat, gender has increasingly become the topic of heated social and political debates in the last couple of decades. In my research, I want to understand how Swiss meat advertisements can convey certain gender roles or stereotypes particularly related to its consumption. In order to do so, I will draw on two main theoretical frameworks: gender performativity and ecofeminism. I think these theories are appropriate because both challenge normative assumptions about the way we act, consume and participate in society, while allowing us to critically reflect on the ‘objectivity’ of the social reality around us.

Gender performativity theory can be useful when trying to detect the repeated acts that need to be performed by individuals in order to be considered part of a specific gender. Better said, the theory of gender performativity will help us observe performative acts of femininity and/or masculinity in Swiss meat advertisements. Ecofeminism will be useful to acknowledge the ethical aspects of the different stages of meat and can give a good understanding of the connection between animal’s exploitation, women’s oppression and the degradation of nature and the environment. Ecofeminism can also be a powerful tool to identify gender stereotypes and assumptions.

In the following subchapters, I will give a broader overview of the theories of gender performativity and ecofeminism in relation to the specific topic of meat advertisement and gender.

3.1 Gender

3.1.1 Gender Performativity

The first scholar to introduce the concept of performativity in the field of gender studies was philosopher Judith Butler (Meyerhoff, 2015). Butler is a post-structuralist philosopher, and their pioneer feminist research has gained prominence across several disciplines. Some may wrongly argue that the category of sex and gender are the same thing and that there is no need for distinction. However, Butler states that all bodies are gendered from the moment they start existing in a social setting (Salih, 2007), whereas the category of 'sex', is believed to be "natural" and "biological" but has sociocultural components too. It is this social setting that constructs the rules of how gender is performed. In other words, there are no gender characteristics that are inborn in us humans as a species (He, 2017). Following this line of thought, Butler claims that we are not our gender, but rather we do, act and perform our gender. In the first chapter of their prominent book *Gender Trouble*, they state that "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body as a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1999, p.43).

Particular attention has to be paid to the above cited expression "rigid regulatory frame". This signals that Butler doesn't believe that social subjects are free to decide which gender to display to others, since the frame in which the subject can move, perform and act is already regulated and is only allowed a "limited number of 'costumes'" (Salih, 2007, p.56). This means that Butler understands "the gendered body as a discursive construction, in the sense that existing bodies could be more adequately understood as a continuum than as a clear-cut binarism of female versus male body" (Motschenbacher, 2009, p.1). Gender can thus be considered a "corporeal style" and a sequence of acts which, if not rigorously followed can lead to societal punishment. "Doing" gender correctly following the "highly regulatory frame" can therefore play a significant role in one's cultural and literal survival (Butler, 1999, p.43).

When a subject "does" gender, "there is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler, 1999, p.33). With

this Butler is not stating that gender is a performance, and they make a clear (and necessary) distinction between performance and performativity. In an interview they clarify that performance comes with the assumption that there is a pre-existing subject. Butler instead claims that it is the performativity that brings the subject into existence (Salih, 2007, p. 57).

Gender performativity can also be enacted through our consumption choices. Particularly in relation to nutrition, there are certain foods that are perceived as more masculine rather than feminine. The same is also true the other way around. This conception is mainly based on the perception of strength, power and wealth, assigning “weak foods” to women and “strong foods” to men or as a means to enhance one's masculinity or femininity (De Backer et al., 2020). Meat is one of the most overt examples of this. In fact, “men are more likely to eat or express a preference for meat, especially red meat” (Lax & Mertig, 2020, p.1). In contrast, women are more likely to favour vegetable-based meals or ingredients (Lax & Mertig, 2020). The quote “real men eat meat” (De Backer et al., 2020; Rosenfeld et al., 2021) or that men need more meat than women do (Lax & Mertig, 2020) are popular beliefs in patriarchal societies that link masculinity with the consumption of meat.

I understand Butler’s interpretation of gender as highly valuable in the study of gender stereotypes portrayed in Swiss meat advertisements. As I will show in the later analysis, meat advertising is heavily charged with performative acts of masculinity and femininity that function as a subtle endorsement of male meat consumption.

3.1.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

The academic field of masculinity studies is relatively new and has seen its major developments in the last couple of decades. Masculinity studies considers masculinity as a historical, cultural and social construct and aims to provide insights into the sources and manifestations of masculine power and domination, explore how masculine identities are constructed and performed and elucidate the differences and similarities between man as individuals or as a group around the issues of sex, sexuality, identity, culture and other persistent social issues (Bhatti, 2022, p.1).

The conceptual development with major relevance that originates from masculinity studies is certainly that of hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2019; Bhatti, 2022). The concept was first developed by R.W. Connell and it was originally formulated as

[t]he pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue. Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. [...] It was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense; only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodied the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men." (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832).

Connell posits the presence of a dominant form of masculinity within a specific context, characterised as a cultural archetype of 'being a man' that gains its credibility from mutual acknowledgment among the individuals who embody and profit from this model, as well as those who are subordinated to it. Sociologist Mike Donaldson in turn (1993) described hegemonic masculinity with a series of adjectives: "exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent, but pseudo-natural, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich and socially sustained" (p.4) . These definitions describe well how hegemonic masculinity holds a dominant position which is maintained – and has to be voraciously maintained – and strengthened by social institutions, therefore safeguarding this continuum of power and subordination with respect to women and femininity or other forms of masculinity. In fact, Connell (2013) identified four different types of masculinity along with the hegemonic one: complicit, subordinate and marginalised. Complicit masculinity indicates those individuals that do not necessarily promote hegemonic masculinity but are complicitly upholding its structure to prevent their own subordination. Subordinated masculinities aim to describe those masculinities that are "not man enough" and do not conform to heteronormative hegemonic standards. Finally, marginalised masculinities are representative of those men that share heterosexual values with hegemonic masculinities, but find themselves metaphorically at the

margins of society due to their ethnicity, class, gender identity, race, disability etc. Most importantly, these marginalised masculinities are dependent on hegemonic masculinities for “authorisation” (Bhatti, 2022, p.3). We can therefore deduct that, not all men ascribe to the model of hegemonic masculinity, but all men can profit from it (Donaldson, 1993).

Hegemonic masculinity isn’t only a concept that served as a critique to the sex role theory (Bhatti, 2022) but it also serves as a conceptualisation of how uneven relationships among genders are tacitly legitimated in our society (Messerschmidt, 2019). Despite hegemonic masculinity being a ground-breaking concept for disciplines like gender studies, it has been at times misinterpreted, misused and critiqued. Scholars mistakenly tried to identify or pinpoint who and what a “real hegemonic man” is (Messerschmidt, 2019). However, the relational and abstract features of hegemonic masculinity were missing in these attempts. In fact, hegemonic masculinity is to be considered abstract in the sense that it is not descriptive of precise features, but rather of unequal power relations that are historical and thus can vary over time. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the matter that its conceptual framework is not directed to individuals but rather to relational dynamics. Instead, it serves to highlight that “all participants constituting an unequal gender relationship are collective orchestrators of hegemonic masculinities” (Messerschmidt, 2019, p.87). In other words, hegemonic masculinity doesn’t operate individually, but finds itself in constant relation to gender inequalities forming a pattern of hegemony and domination (Messerschmidt, 2019).

To better understand the concept of hegemonic masculinity it is worth taking a step back in time and understand where the expression “hegemony” comes from. The term was first used by Antonio Gramsci in his prison notebook, which is still one of the most essential contributions to Marxian thinking (Donaldson, 1993). In his *Quaderni del carcere* Gramsci discussed how power is won over, held and how this can lead to the creation or destruction of social groups. In other words, he studied how the access to power is ruled and maintained by the powerful in a society (Donaldson, 1993). The notion of hegemony is particularly fitting for recognizing what the common ideologies in a society are and how they are presumed to be natural (Reeser, 2020d), therefore creating a normative state of things. The powerful, or the ruling class, have the

influence to “impose a definition of a situation, set terms of issue discussion, formulate ideals and define morality” which is essential in the process of maintaining domination (Donaldson, 1993). In tangible practice, this influence is also maintained through the media and through a configuration of the state apparatus and social institutions as “ordinary”, “natural” and “normal” (Donaldson, 1993). If we apply this same line of thought to the exploitative meat industry of our modern times, we can find a lot of parallels in the fact that meat consumption and production have also been constructed in a way that seems “ordinary”, “natural” and “normal”. On top of that, the type of advertising about meat products that we find in the media reinforces this ideology. Already in his day, Gramsci saw the incredible power of advertising and considered the social category of advertisers (among others) as “weavers of the fabric of hegemony” and as the most influential agents of masculinist sexual ideology (Donaldson, 1993, p.3). Similarly, West & Lay (2000) reflect on how masculine values are culturally crafted. They describe cultural values as being

[...] transmitted almost exclusively by textual means - whether printed (fiction, popular magazines, newspapers), visual (advertising, television, film), or digital and electronic (popular music, the Internet). It is these cultural modes which transmit, legitimise, reinforce, perpetuate or conversely, inflect, question, or contest the material practices of masculinity and the reproduction of patriarchal power.” (p.16).

Meat’s manliness is prevailing in pop culture and the marketing strategies used to promote meat products often encourage men eating meat and place women alongside meat in a sexualising manner (Adams, 2020). This portrayal of women and meat consumption implies that “both women and (non-human) animals are consumption products for men” (Salmen & Dhont, 2023, p.2). Analysing media, and in our particular case advertising, as a powerful vessel for the crafting and reproduction of gender values can therefore result in a significant indicator of what gender expectations and stereotypes reside in a society.

3.2 Sexuality

3.2.1 Heteronormativity

Every action and aspect of life can have a gendered connotation, this is also true for our food consumption and our relationship to food (Sobal, 2005). From a societal and cultural perspective, food has multiple meanings that can express “ethnicity, nationality, region, class, age, sexuality, culture and (perhaps most importantly) gender” (Sobal, 2005, p.136). The gendered meaning of food is not biological but is indeed culturally constructed. In fact, different foods are gendered in different ways across different cultures and historical stages (Bove et al, 2003).

In most Western post-industrialised societies certain foods have been assigned a feminine connotation, while other foods are perceived as being more masculine. ‘Masculine foods’ stereotypically includes food such as beef, hamburgers, potatoes and beer. Feminine food conversely comprises salads, yoghourts, pasta, fruits, vegetables and chocolate (Jensen & Holm, 1999; Sobal, 2005). As a consequence, food is assigned an arbitrary gender, thus making consumption semiotically relevant (Sobal, 2005). We can therefore say, that

[f]ood represents gendered signs (e.g., a bachelor’s refrigerator stocked with beef and beer (Hollows, 2002)), signals (e.g., a single woman’s rejection of eating steak on a date (Chaiken & Pliner, 1987)), or symbols (e.g., a working man grilling beef on a Labour Day holiday (Julier, 2002)) that reflects the male or female identity of the eater of that food. (Sobal, 2005, p.137).

A strong connection between masculinity and meat exists in westernised societies, especially red meat. In fact, “Men tend to hyper masculinize meat and sometimes fetishize it by alleging that every meal has to include meat in order to be considered a ‘real meal’” (Sobal, 2005, pp.137-8).

Symbolically, meat is closely tied with the social imaginary of men engaging in the activity of hunting. This reinforces the idea that masculinity and meat are supposedly linked in accordance to gendered divisions of labour established during the hunter-gatherer era. In fact, power and a higher status came along with being

able to provide meat for themselves (Chan & Zlatevska, 2019). However, there is recent archaeological research showing that women actively participated in hunting activities across different cultures. The separation of activities between the figure of the Man Hunter and the Woman Gatherer is therefore nothing more than a myth (Anderson et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, this collective imaginary suggests the control and domination of nature and its beings has always been men's task, thus embodying the power and virility of successfully triumphing over beasts and nature by men (Lupton, 1996). As Adams (2010) described it, "manhood is constructed in our culture, in part, by access to meat and control of other bodies." (p.16). The act of killing, butchering and eating the animals requires an intentional or unintentional suppression of emotions (Sobal, 2005), which is one of the preeminent characteristics of Western men (Connell, 2005). In the optic of the theory of gender performativity, men – and women – can "do gender" by eating gendered food in gendered ways (Sobal, 2005). This can include showing masculinity in social settings through acts that showcase autonomy regardless of others demands or the availability of more sustainable options (Paisley et al., 2001). In other words, "doing masculinity means eating like a man – consuming foods at manly meals in a manly way" (Sobal, 2005, p.139).

Interestingly, femininity is best expressed by what women abstain from eating (Fagerli & Wandel, 1999), since feminine food consumption is often coupled with light eating and dieting (Mooney & Lorenz, 1997). Therefore, meat is not considered a feminine food because it is perceived as "too strong" and "too heavy" (Roos et al., 2001). A very clear example of how our food consumption is gendered is how vegetarian men's masculinity is perceived as an identity that transgresses the normative image of masculinity and which resonates more with "women's, wimpy, or even gay identities" (Sobal, 2005, p.141). The way meat is prepared is also highly gendered. Women are often depicted by the media preparing meat indoors, while men tend to be portrayed cooking the meat alone or in an environment with other men and often outside at the grill (Sumpter, 2015).

3.2.2 Ecofeminism

In “*Feminism is for Everybody*” American author bell hooks describes the vision of feminism as the ambition to oust a

[...] culture of domination with a world of participatory economics grounded in communalism and social democracy, a world without discrimination based on race or gender, a world where recognition of mutuality and interdependence would be dominant ethos, a global ecological vision of how the planet can survive and how everyone on it can have access to peace and well-being.” (hooks, 2000, p.110).

Ecofeminists firmly believe that inter-species justice is a fundamental part to achieve the utopic reality described by hooks. In the 20th century, the movement aimed at ending animal suffering and abuse in all its forms “by developing a feminist theoretical perspective on the intersection of species, gender, race, class, sexuality and nature” (Gaard, 2017, p.116). In other words, ecofeminists see the liberation of animals – the most vulnerable beings on the planet – as the only way to achieve collective liberation (Gaard, 2017). Even if used in a completely different context, this mindset evokes the words of Martin Luther King Jr., “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (1963, p.1).

The first time ecofeminism was used as a term was in the book “*Le Féminisme ou la Mort*” by French activist and environmentalist Françoise d’Eaubonne (1974). It is a branch of feminism which stems from the observation that women and nature suffer from related forms of oppression and domination. A central place is given to the environment and the relationship that women have with the earth in order to understand its function (Zein & Setiawan, 2017). Ecofeminist perspectives do not aim at placing women in a position of power, but rather aspire to create a participative and collaborative society that does not allow for any group to be in a position of domination (Merchant, 2005). By the same token, ecofeminism tries to highlight the androcentrism that persists in the building and lasting of our values that place the male (andros) in a superior position. This patriarchal system prefers dominion and lack of empathy over compassion and

affection. This position of the andros at the centre of our values is a result of the “extreme historical polarisation of the social roles of men and women” (Puleo, 2017, p.32).

Ecofeminism represents a bold attempt at subverting environmental issues through a critique of the categories of patriarchy, androcentrism, care, sexism and gender (Puleo, 2017). One of the arguments for a union of ecology and feminism is that there are health and reproductive health issues for women that are linked with pollution (Puleo, 2017). Ecofeminist theory analyses the connections between nature and women from a cultural, religious and literary perspective, while addressing the analogue oppression of nature and the oppression of women (Zein & Setiawan, 2017). The goal for ecofeminists is not limited to better natural resources management, but rather to create a new framework of how we think of ourselves and nature in the seriousness of the state of climate change (Puleo, 2017). The most prominent aspects of domination and oppression highlighted by ecofeminism “include but are not limited to seeing women and nature as property, seeing men as the curators of culture and women as the curators of nature, and how men dominate women and humans dominate nature.” (Zein & Setiawan, 2017, p.1).

However, ecofeminism does not suggest that women have an inborn deeper connection to nature and sustainability than men. Even though statistics show that women tend to make up the majority in environmental movements and are more likely to vote for social justice matters (Herzog, 2007), gender – or an essential, biologist conception of it – should not be considered to be a determinant for the devotion to environmental justice (Puleo, 2017). Rather, we should recognise the immense value of “capacities and attitudes of empathy and attentive care” (Puleo, 2017, p.33) that are often imposed on girls from a young age and impart them to all human beings, regardless of their gender. If we consider a constructive approach to gender subjectivity or gender performativity, we can recognise that women have been historically placed in social positions that required them to take care of the most vulnerable, the maintenance of the domestic space, which in statistical terms, also translates to the development of a “relational subjectivity” which can make one more empathetic towards others (Puleo, 2017, p.27). But as the theory of gender performativity stipulates, these are learned traits, not innate ones.

The international dimension of ecofeminism is also an aspect that makes my research more complete. It will allow for a more interconnected understanding of the phenomenon of carnism, since it is women in the alleged “Global South” that suffer the most from the destruction of the environment (Puleo, 2017). To achieve a sustainable future, Puleo says, a critical approach to gender stereotypes is also necessary. In fact, I would argue that if we can redefine the discourse around meat by taking gender stereotypes into consideration, for if meat were no longer described and perceived as a food that can enhance an individual's virility, its consumption might decrease considerably.

One of the main criticisms ecofeminism received in the late 1990s is that of being essentialist in regard to gender, only operating with a gender binary of man versus woman (Gaard, 2017), therefore excluding individuals who do not feel represented by these two categories. In the last couple of decades, ecofeminism has evolved and it now serves to understand the many ways in which multiple systems of oppression can reinforce each other. That is why, “to be truly inclusive, any theory of ecofeminism must take into consideration the findings of queer theory” (Gaard, 1997, p.2).

I chose the theory of ecofeminism as a critical lens for the topic of meat advertisement and gender stereotypes because it allows “to understand the relationship between humanity and the rest of nature, as well as underpinning gender assumption.” (Stevens et al., 2013, p.161).

4. Approaching Meat

Researching the topic of meat has been an incredibly eye-opening, but also a disorientating process at times. When looking for a definition of what meat is, I mostly came across the dictionary definition: Meat is “the flesh of an animal when it's used for meat” (Cambridge dictionary, 2023) or also “the edible part of something as distinguished from its covering (such as a husk or shell)” (Merriam-Webster, 2023). Interestingly enough, according to the Merriam Webster dictionary the noun “meat” can be used to describe “food” when it is not in a liquid state. However, from a sociological and cultural point of view, this definition is incredibly reductive and unsatisfying. What, how and who does become meat? And most importantly,

how does meat become meat? What does ‘becoming meat’ mean? Where is meat made and where does it go?

This chapter places meat at the centre of the discussion and tries to define it from a sociocultural point of view. I will explore the meaning of meat that goes beyond the mainstream Western understanding of meat as animal flesh apt for consumption. The chapter will be divided into four main parts. First, I will give a brief definition of “meat”. The second through the fourth parts of this chapter are inspired by the framing categories of production, distribution, preparation and consumption used by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who was particularly attentive to power dynamics in societies. He developed the above-mentioned categories in the book *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (1979). Bourdieu used these categories to show how economic as well as social structures are interconnected in shaping people's preferences.

Therefore, production will represent the second section of this chapter. This part gives me the opportunity to delve into the aspects of how meat becomes meat with some examples from the Swiss market. The third part of this chapter is dedicated to both preparation and consumption, allowing to reflect on the meaning of preparing and consuming meat from a sociocultural perspective with a specific focus on the meaning of this consumption. By distribution I understand the means by which meat is distributed to the consumers. Since the physical and spatial distribution of meat differs from the central topic of this thesis, I consider the category of distribution as the social and cultural efforts and mechanisms used to distribute meat as an appealing product. Therefore, the part on distribution will be approached in depth in my analysis of the Swiss media advertisement on meat.

While going through this chapter the reader might notice that production and consumption are often talked about in different subchapters and not only in the dedicated ones. We will observe that culture has a primal role in shaping our idea of meat, therefore a cultural studies perspective has to be included. In fact, cultural studies works with the underlying assumption “that there is, almost always, a dynamic relationship between

production and consumption, and hence that consumption is a form of ‘secondary production’” (Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023, p.220). French Jesuit and cultural critic Michel de Certeau wrote on this matter:

The presence and circulation of a representation [...] tells us nothing about what it is for its users. We must first analyse its manipulation by users who are not its makers. Only then can we gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilisation. (de Certeau, 1984 quoted in Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023, p.220)

Preparation and consumption are also closely tied together through traditions, emotions, gender relations and collective and individual identities. Therefore, meat has to be considered “an object of sociological research” (Nungesser & Winter, 2021, p.109). For this reason, it is beneficial to leave the categories of production, distribution, preparation and consumption interacting amongst each other across the different chapter sections in order to have a better understanding of what the social and cultural meaning of meat is.

4.1 Carnism

The term Carnism was introduced by the American social psychologist Melanie Joy. In her book *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows* (2010) Joy leads readers to ask important questions about their own nutrition from an ideological point of view.

Interestingly, Joy (2010) starts her book with explaining what it means to be a vegetarian person on an ideological and cultural level. She states that a vegetarian person is perceived as having a particular set of beliefs, including that eating animals is unethical or bad for one's health and the planet. The suffix ‘arian’ in vegetarian denotes even more that it is precisely a belief that entails a set of unavoidable principles (Joy, 2010, p.29). The renunciation of animal foods is thus seen as a true philosophy of life precisely because it goes beyond what is considered “the norm”.

The “problem” arises since the act of consuming meat is in turn not labelled as an ideology, but rather as “a given, the ‘natural’ thing to do, the way things have always been and the way things will always be”

(p.29). The reason why the meat-eating culture is considered natural is precisely because “the belief system that underlies this behaviour is invisible”, and it is this invisible belief system that Joy defines as carnism (p.29). The invisibility of the system automatically never gives rise to the need to name the ideology that supports the consumption of animals in the first place and makes the choice to do so seem a non-choice but simply the norm. “Normality” is thus represented by the majority of people, but we tend to forget that even that “normality” is the result of an ideology, which, however, being practised by the majority becomes difficult to distinguish and criticise. To enable readers to visualise the invisibility of carnism, Joy makes the comparison with the patriarchy. This too is an ideological system on which the majority of societies are based, and which devalues the feminine in comparison with the masculine. And like vegetarians vis-à-vis carnism, feminists are also labelled for having “beliefs” that fall outside what Joy calls “mainstream way of life” (p.31), and not the other way around.

Carnism is defined as follows:

Carnism is the belief system in which eating certain animals is considered ethical and appropriate. Carnists – people who eat meat – are not the same as carnivores. Carnivores are animals that are dependent on meat to survive. Carnists are also not merely omnivores. An omnivore is an animal – human or nonhuman – that has the physiological ability to ingest both plants and meat. But, like ‘carnivore’, ‘omnivore’ is a term that describes one’s biological constitution, not one’s philosophical choice. Carnists eat meat not because they need to, but because they choose to, and choices always stem from beliefs. (Joy, 2010, p. 30).

Joy (2010) refers to the carnist ideology as a “violent ideology” (p.33) because it is a system that Heavily relies on violence in order to exist.

4.2 Meat Definition: What is Meat?

The introductory text “Meat: a transnational analysis” to the volume *Meat!* (Chatterjee et al., 2021) has been incredibly helpful in expanding my definition and understanding of meat. Women, gender, and

sexuality professors Sushmita Chatterjee and Banu Subramanian (2021) propose a collection of twelve essays questioning what meat is using a non-Western lens and allowing categories such as gender, class, race, ableism, and politics to shape its understanding. In other words, they approach the topic of meat from outside the contemporary mainstream definition of it which reduces meat to “the flesh of an animal when it’s used for meat” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023).

Throughout history meat has undergone different framings. These framings are constructed “based on social exigencies, disciplinary framings and economic rationalities” (Chatterjee et al., 2021, p.3). When framed as a consumption good, meat is considered to be dead, without agency and a voice (Chatterjee et al., 2021, p.2). However, the meaning and definition of meat is in constant evolution and has “to be studied through divergent scales of place, time and their many entanglements” (Chatterjee et al., 2021, p.2). This non-static composure of meat can be associated with political decisions, food economics, technological and scientific modernisation that have a direct impact on meat production and agriculture, but also on our environment (Nungesser & Winter, 2021).

I recognise meat as an active object with an important cultural and social significance (Chiles & Fitzgerald, 2017). In fact, meat, and the image that a society conveys about it are not predicted by material or biophysical necessity. Rather, as Nungesser and Winter (2021) point out, the consumption and production of meat are “socially and culturally induced, regulated and restricted” (p.111). In the context of this project, I read and understand meat as a place for political debate that has created different social identities like veganism, vegetarianism and flexitarianism among others. In fact, meat can be a social instrument that can play a central role in how gender is performed by individuals. Ultimately, I understand meat and its – urgent reframing – as the possible solution or exacerbation of the climate crisis depending on how its consumption develops in the near future.

4.3 Production (or Transformation)

“Follow the chicken and find the world” said Haraway (2007, p.274) in her posthumanist book *When Species Meet*. With this quote she wants to signal the deep connection there is between humans and animals suggesting that understanding animals and their experiences could provide us with a better understanding of us humans and our environment. This chapter section on production allows for precisely that. When exploring how meat production functions from a social, cultural and gender perspective we gain an even better understanding of what meat is and represents in our societies. The technicality and materiality of meat production won’t be a topic here since they are out of the scope of this project and research question.

At a global level meat has long been considered a “natural” choice for human consumption and as logical consequence of the control and domination exercised over every aspect of the natural environment (Fiddes, 1989). Therefore, humans tend to associate becoming “civilised” or starting civilization, with the practice of hunting and farming animals for our own survival (Fiddes, 1989). More recent studies also highlight this “naturalness” that still hovers around meat production and meat consumption (Joy, 2010 ; Chiles & Fitzgerald, 2017).

It is worth taking a moment to reflect on the concept of “civilisation” in connection to meat. In this regard, research conducted by historical sociologist Norbert Elias in the book *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (The Civilising Process) offers interesting insights. As for meat, Elias explains the processes that created certain human preference or sensibilities towards some practices. In fact, the way we interact with animals and meat hasn’t always been the same. For example, in premodern courts, animals were often presented at the table still alive and carved at the table where everyone could see it. People in courts then started to become increasingly disgusted by this ‘spectacle’ because it was considered barbarian. This led to the whole animal being served in pieces or parts of an animal after it had been sliced or carved in the kitchen by servants (Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023). In doing that “[t]he distasteful was removed behind the scenes of social life” (Elias quoted in Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023, p.4). More recently, this phenomenon of disgust and detachment from meat has reached an increased level that includes cognitively making an effort to avoid

thinking that we are eating animals (Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023). This aspect is further explored in 4.4., the consumption section.

The distancing that Western societies have taken from meat production described by Elias can easily be observed in our spatial realities. It suffices to think about the form and places in which meat can be purchased. Meat in the supermarket is often packaged and already cut or processed into ready-made meals, making it difficult to realise its true origin (Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023). There are three ways in which meat production has become further alienated from our human experience, in particular in the Swiss context:

First, there is the physical and tangible distance we have from animal production. In the 21st century the job of killing animals is executed in slaughterhouses which, as described by Pachirat, are “hidden in plain sight” (Pachirat, 2011, p.1). In fact, most of them can be found in industrialised settings, far away from people's daily lives. This isolation allows one to completely avoid “visual, auditory or olfactory contact with the animals which are killed and processed for food” (Nungesser & Winter, 2021, p.120). Sometimes slaughter sites are not even accessible thanks to surrounding walls (Vialles, 1994). In her book *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* Melanie Joy (2010) refers to factory farms as “Confined Animal Feeding Operations” (CAFO), which already points to the separation and marginalisation of the animals while they are being raised for their flesh. She particularly points to the tragic conditions in which animals spend their entire lives. She describes the conscious and collective ignorance of these conditions as “knowing without knowing” (p.29). In other words, as humans we know that meat comes from killed animals, but we are unwilling to know how and where they are slaughtered. This phenomenon was also introduced by Bourdieu (1977) with the concept of “learned ignorance” which operates through avoiding certain types of knowledge. He believed that this “function of concealment is precisely what creates the need for social and cultural analysis of everyday life” (Bourdieu quoted in Bjørkdahl & Lykke, 2023, p.4).

Secondly, the previously mentioned aspects also resonate with how meat products are marketed and how they do not inform the consumers about the realities of meat production. For instance, dairy farming is a

pillar of Swiss agriculture. This has led to the cow becoming a symbol of Swiss identity and culture along with the alpine scenery (Forney, 2013). Oester (1989/90) analysed advertising images of the Swiss alps and noted how even internationally this idealised representation exists. Of course, these idyllic landscapes are also translated in the adverts made by Swiss meat advertisers of meat products. This imagery informs the consumer of a production mechanism that omits the suffering of animals and fails to give any information on the real meat production.

Thirdly, this distance and alienation from meat production is also present in Swiss academic research. Surprisingly, there is a lack of sociological research that explores Swiss farmers and agriculture (Forney, 2013). Farmers still have significant political relevance and in fact they receive around “6% of the annual budget for agriculture and food” from the federal state (Forney, 2013, p.1) Despite these noteworthy circumstances, the sociological research on farmers in Switzerland has many gaps, so much so that the funds for agriculture and farming research are solely focused on technical progress for production (Forney, 2013). Swiss agriculture underwent the same process of neoliberalisation observable elsewhere (Dibden et al., 2009) in response to the new political “neoliberal and multifunctionality logics” (Potter and Tilzey, 2005) that required farmers to reinvent themselves. In fact, new paradigms made prices sink and pressured farmers to find new strategies for survival through the adoption of agro-environmental schemes to get access to economic subsidy (Forney, 2013).

Lastly, meat production also comes with a baggage of classism. From a cultural perspective, classism “refers to the promotion of negative beliefs or practices that portray poor, less educated or socially unaccepted individuals as inferior and responsible for their own position in society” (Inclusio, 2023). As we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, with the theory of civilisation by Elias also came increased sensitivities of the higher class. It was servants, therefore, who had to deal with the carving of animals. In recent times, this disparity is still present. In fact, workers in the meat industry are often immigrants who suffer from multiple, intersecting forms of exploitation. The working conditions are disastrous, including cold temperatures, high levels of humidity and reduced daylight (Ursachi et al., 2021). Slaughterhouse workers

not only find themselves in a difficult social position that leads to their moral stigmatisation but also have to deal with unacceptable working conditions (Nungesser & Winter, 2021). The reality of the production of meat leads to a perverse mechanism of dependency between a large majority that refuses to even come into contact with the production of meat and a mistreated working class that does a job deemed “necessary” for society. Therefore, I argue that meat advertising in Switzerland enforces the distance that consumers have from the reality of meat production.

4.4 Consumption and Preparation

Production, distribution, consumption and preparation find themselves in a very intricate relationship which sometimes makes it hard to understand which is influencing which. With regard to consumption, Stern et al. (1997) state that in addition to being a social and economic matter, consumption’s impacts are biophysical and have a direct influence on the environment, especially when we research meat. By studying social structural factors however, we can grasp how they conciliate “macro-structural factors and psychological conditions” (Gossard & York, 2003, p.3). In other words, individual factors, or the “social structural position” (p.7) such as gender, residence, ethnicity, and class can have a great impact on how one consumes meat.

However, the individual consumption has to be considered only a symptom of the bigger picture. Various philosophers have reflected on the topic of meat. Among them, was philosopher Jaques Derrida (1991), who is recognised as one of the leaders of poststructuralist thinking – a movement that rejected the idea that there can be a “general science of meaning” (Britannica, 2023). Although he is most famously known for his theory of language deconstruction, he was also concerned with food consumption. In fact, Derrida’s quote “one never eats entirely on one’s own” (Derrida quoted in Chatterjee & Subramaniam, 2021, p.8) is particularly relevant for this chapter. This quote has multiple relevant layers that need a more in depth analysis. The first layer is that consumption is never something that happens in an isolated environment and that the act of eating has not only an effect on us but on a larger web of interdependencies that connect

production, consumption and distribution. The second implies that this interconnectedness can have a direct impact on our communities and ecosystems, therefore suggesting taking this variable into account when making consumption choices. I believe that the above-mentioned quote also has the power to challenge the quote “eating meat is a personal choice” often invoked by carnists when directly or indirectly confronted with their eating habits. Eating meat is a choice, clearly, but as we can see it comes with a high cost, for the animals and for the environment. It is therefore questionable in how far such a choice can really be considered “personal”.

With her definition of carnism Melanie Joy (2010) tries to unveil the belief systems that enable us humans to love and worship certain animals, while subjecting others to tremendous treatment for our daily consumption. Joy states consumers are completely desensitised to the nature of carnism and see meat consumption as “normal, natural and necessary”. This normative understanding of meat consumption is a result of the “dissociation” (Joy, 2010, p.29) of meat from its natural source. She describes carnism as a belief system that serves to support an “invisible ideology” and states:

While it is difficult, if not impossible, to question an ideology that we don’t even know exists, it’s even more difficult when that ideology actively works to keep itself hidden. This is the case with ideologies such as carnism. This particular type of ideology is a violent ideology, because it is literally organised around physical violence. If we were to remove the violence from the system – to stop killing animals – the system would cease to exist. Meat cannot be procured without slaughter. (Joy, 2010, pp.32-33)

Consequently, ideologies like vegetarianism or veganism that contrast a dominant culture are much more noticeable and subject to stigma (Potts, 2010). Joy (2010) also makes an important distinction between the term carnivore and carnist. A carnivore is an animal that depends on meat for its survival, a carnist on the other hand is a human that eats other non-human animals not because they need to, but because they choose to do so, “and choices always stem from beliefs” (Joy, 2010, p.30). She describes people making the choice

of consuming animals as being trapped in “the matrix of meat” (Joy, 2010, p.116), which allows to see animals as objects for consumption rather than sentient subjects.

To understand the importance that is given to meat and its consumption in the 21st century it is worth considering how this status emerged in our Western societies. Chiles and Fitzgerald (2017) explore the main historical developments from a meat-culture perspective. They find that the ways in which meat consumption has been legitimised across history has changed and evolved along with political-economical, biophysical and cultural contexts. In other words, it is not the material or biophysical quality of meat that has influenced its human consumption, but it is rather how meat consumption was framed and justified across different epochs. However, Chiles and Fitzgerald (2017) also state that

[r]ituals, habits, traditions and desires have stoked the demand for meat as well, contemporary arguments that insist that the demand for meat stems primarily from the material necessities of political economy, environmental utility, or nutrition are thus only telling half of the story.” (p.14)

They then continue by claiming that “culture bestows legitimacy upon certain lifestyles while condemning others. It dictates how the material world should be interpreted, what should be valued, what should be avoided, how the world ought to be, and even what individuals should eat” (Chiles and Fitzgerald, 2017, p.14). It is therefore glaring that the culture and social setting that surrounds us are largely responsible for what we decide to fill our plates with. However autonomous these choices may seem to us, there are many cultural and social factors that direct our preferences.

5. Maintaining and Restoring Hegemonic Masculinity Through Meat

One key characteristic of masculinity and its hegemonic status is its precariousness. Men are often required to maintain and assert their masculinity through the display of social and public acts (Bhatti, 2005). Very often, this display entails a clear distancing from anything that is emotional while embracing strong competitive assets. In other words, this performative gender display creates an environment where “their

daily interactions help perpetuate a system that subordinates femininity and non hegemonic masculinities” (Bird, 1996, p.120). Commercials centred around meat heavily rely on the idea of meat appropriation and consumption “as a means to restore hegemonic masculinity in the context of attacks on its continuous dominance.” (Rogers, 2008: p. 282).

Meat advertising is brimming with examples of men strictly behaving inside the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity. Among the selected corpus of this research, nine advertisements clearly make use of such displays of power and dominance over femininity and other forms of masculinity. The values of hegemonic masculinity that are conveyed through Swiss meat advertisement are: suppression of emotions, competition with other men and engaging solely in activities labelled as masculine.

5.1 Emotional Detachment

From 2012 to 2014, Bell Schweiz has actively used the supposed oppositional nature of femininity and masculinity in order to convey one simple message: Instead of focusing on feminine activities, men should go back to the grill.

The notion of “self-control” is often brought forward in connection with masculinity. Men are taught from a young age to associate the expression of particular emotions as a “sign of weakness and so as threats to their male identities” (Jeleniewski Seidler, 2007, p.9). One could say that in order to maintain and express hegemonic masculinity, it is essential to abstain from emotional expression or excessive emotionality. It is this suppression of emotional sensitivity that allows for a differentiation between men, women and men embracing other forms of masculinity (Bird, 1996). Furthermore, it is in this distinction with regards to the management of emotions and feelings that males can assert what they are not: female or feminine. Bird (1996) brilliantly describes the continuous effort required from men to enact this distinction by claiming that “the burden for demonstrating difference is on those trying to avoid the default meanings. Difference becomes an aspect of self in which men have valued investment.” (p.126).

Ultimately, this emotional detachment is “one way in which gender hierarchies are maintained. Expressing emotions signifies weakness and is therefore devalued, whereas emotional detachment signifies strength and is valued” (Cancian 1987 quoted in Bird, 1996: p.125). As a consequence, men who don’t respect the imperative of abstaining from emotional attachment and talking feelings are stigmatised and excluded from homosocial interactions (Bird, 1996). Meat producer and seller Bell leveraged the notion of emotional detachment in two ads in particular. The first is titled “Karaoke” and was released in 2012, whereas the second is called “Kino” and was published in 2014. Next, I describe each piece of advertisement and unpack the semiotic signs that arbitrarily connect meat, emotional detachment and hegemonic masculinity.

5.1.1 Spear(s)ed Hearts

In the first scene of the advertisement a man is on a stage animatedly singing "...Baby one more time" by the pop icon Britney Spears at a karaoke event. As he sings "hit me baby one more time" a black bag of coal suddenly hits his face from the right. The camera focuses on the bag with the inscription: "Men, back to the grill" written in German. In the following scene we see a close-up of the meat sizzling on the grill followed by the man humming and turning it with tongs. In the background the viewer can spot other men who are playing football while he tends to the meat on the fire with a relaxed air.

There are several aspects of the man’s singing performance that suggest to the viewer that the main character is not engaging in manly behaviours. First of all, the man is wearing a light pink shirt and has a pink pullover wrapped around his neck. Following the logic of Butler’s theory of gender performativity, fashion plays a central role in the expression of gender. Clothing is not only a reflection of someone’s gender and sexuality, but it actively makes the gender and the sexuality of the person who is wearing it (Vänskä, 2019). Particularly in visual communication, pink can be used as an indicator of someone's sexuality or sexual identity (Koller, 2008). In this case, pink is used to signal that the man is not an individual with strong masculinity values since he is wearing the colour that is generally worn by women. Additionally, his attire is a signal that informs the viewer of the man’s sexuality and masculinity.



Figure 1 - Bag of coal hitting and suggesting men to "go back to the grill"

Secondly, the man is singing Britney Spears' song "...Baby One More Time". Not only is singer Spears globally known as being an icon for the gay community, but the lyrics that the man is singing are also emotionally charged:

“My loneliness is killing me (And I)
I must confess, I still believe (Still believe)
When I'm not with you, I lose my mind
Give me a sign
Hit me, baby, one more time” (Spears, 1998)

The emotionally charged performance, along with the animated song interpretation and the lyrics that the man is singing communicate a sense of loneliness, weakness, dependence from another person and ultimately a lack of self-control of one's emotions.



Figure 2- Man wearing pink shirt and singing Britney Spears animatedly

Ironically, as the man chants the verse “Hit me, baby, one more time” the bag of coal is thrown at him from outside the frame and abruptly hits his face, intimidating not only him, but all men to go back to the grill. In the next scene the man is now wearing a yellow and brown shirt and is standing in front of a grill. As he grills, he smiles confidently, looks at his friends playing football in the background and smiles proudly while he turns the barbecued meat. He also makes indecipherable sounds of approval. All of these changes in the character’s expression and body language suggest that grilling meat is a more appropriate activity for a man.

5.1.2 Men don’t cry

In the first scene of the advertisement, a movie projection has come to its end in a theatre. We see the silhouettes of people standing up from their seats while the big screen reads 'The End'. Several women walk out of the hall weeping and sobbing loudly. Their makeup is smudged, some blow their noses loudly. Then a man is in the spotlight as he moves out of the theatre room, also crying and sobbing. Suddenly a black

bag of coal is thrown at his head from the right side of the framing. The camera focuses on the black coal bag on which is written "Men, back to the grill". The man looks around dazed as if the bag hitting his head has suddenly awakened him or as if he doesn't remember why he was at the theatre in the first place. In the next scene meat sizzling on the grill is shown with a close-up. The advert then ends with the man laughing satisfied and joking with a friend while he uses tongs to turn the meat on the grill.



Figure 3 - Man smiling satisfied as he turns the meat on the grill 48

Despite the advertisement only lasting 30 seconds, there are multiple subliminal messages that need to be unpacked and that ultimately convey a very strong association between being male and consuming meat. The first significant aspect is the main character's environment. He is coming out of a movie hall and is only surrounded by other young women who are crying desperately. This suggests that the movie that the man was watching was made for a predominantly female audience. But most importantly this should imply that he is "out of place". The viewer of the ad is therefore supposed to recognise that the man is engaging in an activity that is considered "unmanly". In addition to that, the man is also sobbing while leaving the cinema, which can be considered as the ultimate demonstration of emotion.

However, the main character's display of emotions is abruptly and violently interrupted by the bag of coal hitting his head. It is unclear who or what threw the bag of coal, which makes the message "Men, back to the grill" written on it even more ambiguous. However, it is clear that the black bag of coal serves as a "punishment" for the fact that the man is engaging in feminine activities, therefore subjecting himself to stigmatisation and social sanctioning. Along with the severe physical and metaphorical punishment, the man also receives the solution to reclaim his role as a man: "return to the grill". In the following scenes, the man is portrayed with a much more self-confident attitude as he stands behind the grill. His bold body language communicates an unspoken awareness that he has found the right activity for him again.

These adverts are a clear example of how control over meat can be an instrument to protect, obtain and maintain values of hegemonic masculinity. In this case the preservation or reappropriation of masculinity is possible through emotional detachment and suppression. The men in the 'Kino' and in the 'Karaoke' adverts are rewarded for their rationality and independence expressed in front of the grill. The ads clearly work with an oppositional scheme that places 'being a man' in direct opposition with stereotypically feminine activities and behaviours.

The violence with which the bag of coals hits these men is a blatant metaphor of the social stigmatisation that men who do not ascribe to traditional values of hegemonic masculinity can be submitted too. It is a clear punishment and interestingly, no one around the "victims" seems to notice or help. Unfortunately, this also reflects the collective attitude in the face of injustices in many cases. These ads suggest that the only way for a man to "be a man" is to embrace the values of hegemonic masculinity – or the values of a "real man" – in order to be accepted and acceptable (Sumpter, 2015). These serve to conform to "socially desirable expectations associated with being a man (such as avoiding femininity, aggression and self-reliance), and violating these norms can negatively affect mental health, since not conforming to traditional masculinity norms is socially sanctioned" (Anzani et al., 2023, p.2). It is precisely the consumption of meat that is shown as the key to regaining one's masculinity.

5.2 Competitiveness

Men's friendships are reported to often lack intimacy. Simultaneously, homosocial interactions are often "formed through competition and exclusion" (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p.3). However, as Hammarén & Johansson (2014) note, this common understanding of the concept of homosociality⁶ is limited to a heteronormative, androcentric and hierarchical understanding of male interactions that serves to maintain their privileged positions.

Along with aggressiveness and emotional detachment, competitiveness is a value that enables men to hold their position in the socio-economic system of capitalism (Itulua-Abumere, 2013). In the next sub-chapters I explore how adverts use meat-centred competition to reinforce a character's masculinity. I understand competitiveness as the "possession of a strong desire to be more successful than others and the quality of being as good as or better than others of a comparable nature." (Oxford Languages, 2023).

5.2.1 No one does it like I do

In the Migros advertisement "Coal or Gas?" two men compete against each other about which grilling technique between coal and gas creates the better end results. To avoid confusion, I refer to the two men as Man 1 and Man 2.

Man 1 is in a garden standing in front of a steaming grill. He picks up a raw steak and places it on the grill and smiles contentedly. We see what Man 1 is grilling thanks to a close-up that frames the sizzling steaks, sausages and ribs which he turns with tongs. We then hear Man 1's voice supported by an orange banner saying "Delicious barbecue needs a smoky flavour" as he licks his little finger.

Man 2 waves enthusiastically from the other side of the hedge but then his voice, also supported by an orange banner says "I want to eat meat, not smoke" as he shakes his head contritely and brushes a salmon fillet with a marinade. His grill filled with meat and a few vegetables is then also framed. Man 2 then swirls

⁶ I use the term homosociality to describe the interaction among cis-hetero men in a social context. In the context of this research, homosociality is particularly relevant when observing male behaviour around the social practice of barbecuing.

the brush in mid-air and catches it on the fly, looking at Man 1 proudly and defiantly. Man 1 vigorously shakes the brush with the marinade on his meat also looking challengingly at his “opponent”. Man 2 then handles some technological devices to measure the temperature of the meat and looks at Man 1 daringly. The narrator intervenes towards the end saying, “Everyone has their own barbecue rules, but there's one they all know: grillitarians benefit at Migros”.

In this advertisement two men clearly compete over who has the best meat grilling technique. They both approach their differences in grilling as something negative and each of them proudly places himself above the other. It also transpires that they each consider themselves grill experts while considering the other completely incompetent. Therefore, we can say that the value of competition is being favoured over those of knowledge sharing, community and compassion. Both men need to prove their superiority and, in this case, they use meat cooking techniques to do so. In proving that they have the best grilling technique they also prove their manhood, which has to be gained “through social displays, competition and aggression” (Ruby & Heine, 2011, p.450). The competition between men promoted in advertising is in direct opposition to the values and practices of equality, collectivity and mutual solidarity promoted by the eco-feminist and environmental movement, according to which there is no need for one figure to excel over the other (Connell, 2020).

5.2.2 The Working Man

The setting of this Coop advertisement is at a worksite where numerous construction workers are on their lunch break. The workers look unsatisfied at their packed lunch consisting of dry sandwiches, breadsticks and cut raw vegetables. The site manager says “tsch tsch”⁷ into the walkie talkie, ordering the rest of the working crew to steal a grill with the crane from a garden adjacent to the construction site. The workers

⁷ « Tsch tsch » is the expression or onomatopoeic sound that the Coop supermarket has been using for several years for its summer barbecue campaigns. The sound aims to reproduce the sizzling sound that meat makes when it is turned over the fire. In the various Coop commercials, it is accompanied by a 180° rotation of the hand with the palm first towards the ground and then towards the sky, as if the hand of the person miming the gesture was the meat being turned on the grill.

look up as the grill is landed on the construction site by the crane and then have a big group laugh. In the following scene, a man with a bowl and a tong comes out of his house and heads for the grill, realising, however, that it has disappeared. The robbed man looks around confused as the narrating voice says: “now we can grill!”.

The workers decide to embark into dishonest and malevolent actions in order to “upgrade” their lunch. In their eyes, having access to meat being grilled is an improvement of their initial condition. The fact that they loudly laugh at the thought of the person who is now without meat, shows that they are proud of their actions and feel no remorse. There is also a significant dynamic of class at play that should be explored. The workers are stealing from someone that is likely to have a better income than they do, and this is probably one reason that they lack any type of resentment. On the other hand, aggression, competitiveness and emotional suppression are also the factors that allow men to position themselves in the socio-economic system. Men are therefore placed in a capitalistic setting that forces them onto “a network of social relations that encourages sets of behaviours recognised as masculine.” (Itulua-Abumere, 2013, p.43). What matters in this circumstance is that the group of men managed to gain their access to meat, by competing with another man to get hold of meat, but how they did it seems irrelevant.



Figure 4 - Workers being unsatisfied with their small lunch



Figure 5 - Workers being happy for their gained access to meat

Two other common beliefs that this advertisement is perpetuating is that a meal without meat is not a full meal and that “real men eat meat” (Rosenfeld et al., 2021 ; De Backer et al., 2020). Before stealing the grill, the men were incredibly sad and unsatisfied with their packed lunch, but as soon as they get access to the

meat, their mood suddenly changes. This sudden emotional change also communicates to the viewer that meat is a vessel for joy and happiness. Adams (2010) discussed the aspect of men “needing” meat particularly in relation to the working man:

It has traditionally been felt that the working man needs meat for strength. A superstition operates in this belief: by eating the muscle of strong animals, we will become strong. According to the mythology of patriarchal culture, meat promotes strength; the attributes of masculinity are achieved through eating these masculine foods. The literal evocation of male power is found in the concept of meat. (Adams, 2010, p.56).

Studies in Finland compared male carpenters with male engineers and they found that carpenters tend to give higher importance to meat, while engineers are more attentive to their physical health and vegetable intake (Roos et al., 2001). They also found that carpenters tend “to more actively embrace hegemonic masculinity and reject what is feminine than the engineers, whereas [the engineers]... negotiated new ways to be masculine and reformulated their definition of masculinity.” (Roos et al., 2001, p.54).

Ultimately, men tend to commonly be perceived as more manly if they eat large portions of food. Women, on the contrary, are perceived as being less feminine when they eat as much or more than a man, which causes them to be conscious of the constant scrutiny by other men or other women. The display of pride and joy that the workers manifest collectively as they manage to steal and take possession over large quantities of meat serves as a sign that “men participate in a performance of privilege in which they may eat expansively and without concern for social repercussions.” (Buerkle, 2009, p.81).

5.3 Engaging in Feminine-Labelled Activities

The commercials analysed under this section provide an insight into how the meat industry often places femininity and masculinity in direct opposition. This is a popular technique used in media with men usually portrayed as being naturally rational, aggressive and practical. Women on the other hand tend to be portrayed as caregivers, in fulfilling nurturing roles and with a wide emotional expressiveness (Itulua-

Abumere, 2013). In the case of these three adverts promoted by Bell, femininity and masculinity are characterised as polar opposites that cannot coexist in one person. In fact, hegemonic masculinity is constantly reinforced by values of heteronormativity and homophobia (Donaldson, 1993, p.3).

5.3.1 Barbie Men

In the Bell advertisement “American” a white middle aged man gets up from the counter of a semi-deserted bar and goes towards the jukebox while a younger woman looks at him provocatively. The man inserts the money into the machine and selects song number 30. This is how the song “Barbie Girl” starts playing from the jukebox. The young woman sitting at the bar gives him a look of surprise and disapproval. As the man is preparing to return to his seat a black bag of coal hits him in the face from the left. The camera focuses on the bag on which "Men, go back to the grill" is written in big white letters. In the following scene we see a close-up of the meat sizzling on the grill and then the satisfied man says "oh yeah, this is beautiful" and turns the meat with tongs while laughter is heard in the background.

As the man picks the Barbie song from the jukebox, he is immediately being judged by the other bar customers. Particular emphasis is placed on the change of attitude that the woman who looks at the man displays. Indeed, her mood towards the man goes from an interested look to a look of disapproval as soon as she realises what song the man has selected. If earlier her gaze reflected attraction and interest towards the man, now it transmits slight contempt, which is meant for the viewer to feel too. The young woman in the advertisement has the role of being the first point of disapproval for the man's taste in music. Her disapproval comes from the fact that he is not performing gender (Butler, 1999) the way society would expect him too.



Figure 6 - Woman looking at a man in disbelief for selecting the Barbie Song from the juke box

5.3.1 Painful Waxing

In this Bell advert a man stands shirtless in front of his bathroom mirror. He is about to place a cold strip of wax on his chest. He quickly removes it and it leaves his skin reddened. Then suddenly a bag of black coal hits the man's head. On the bag is written "Men, go back to the grill". In the last scene we see the man grilling chicken on a lit, smoking grill. He is in a large garden and behind him is a group of people sitting at a table. He laughs as he turns the meat as if to say "how could I forget that this is what I'm supposed to do?" and then turns his head smiling towards his friends.

The man's choice of waxing his chest hair undergoes severe judgement and punishment that is represented by the bag of coal violently hitting his head. In our modern society, hair removal in general is considered to be a rather feminine activity because of the supposed unattractiveness that body hair covering a woman's body evokes (Clarke & Braun, 2019). Hair removal in men is more accepted when it serves the purpose of enhancing a man's sexual prowess and sexual capital. However, the imaginary of a man that pays too much attention to his appearance diverges from the normative masculinity and is named metrosexual masculinity,

which corresponds with an “ambiguous masculinity” (Clarke & Braun, 2019, p.7). In other words, a hairless man is considered feminised, and therefore not traditionally masculine.

5.3.1 Zumba

The exact same punitive dynamic is promoted in another ad, also by the brand Bell. In this case the man is in a dance studio where a group of slim, young, white women are taking a Zumba class. The man is fat and wears tight grey leggings, a blue tank top, a headband, and pink and black shoes. Initially the man is confused and struggles to follow the steps of the instructor. Once he is confident in his steps, the man moves in a casual manner and has a more relaxed and amused expression. Suddenly, however, the bag of charcoal with the inscription “Men, go back to the grill” hits him in the face, rendering him dazed. Then, a grill is framed with sizzling sausages and the man, this time wearing a checked shirt, hums relaxed as he turns the sausages on the grill.

This contrast between feminine and masculine which is represented respectively by practicing Zumba and the act of grilling is a clear signal that associates masculinity with meat consumption. The commercial also promotes the idea that it is through the consumption, possession and control of meat that a man can increase his masculinity.

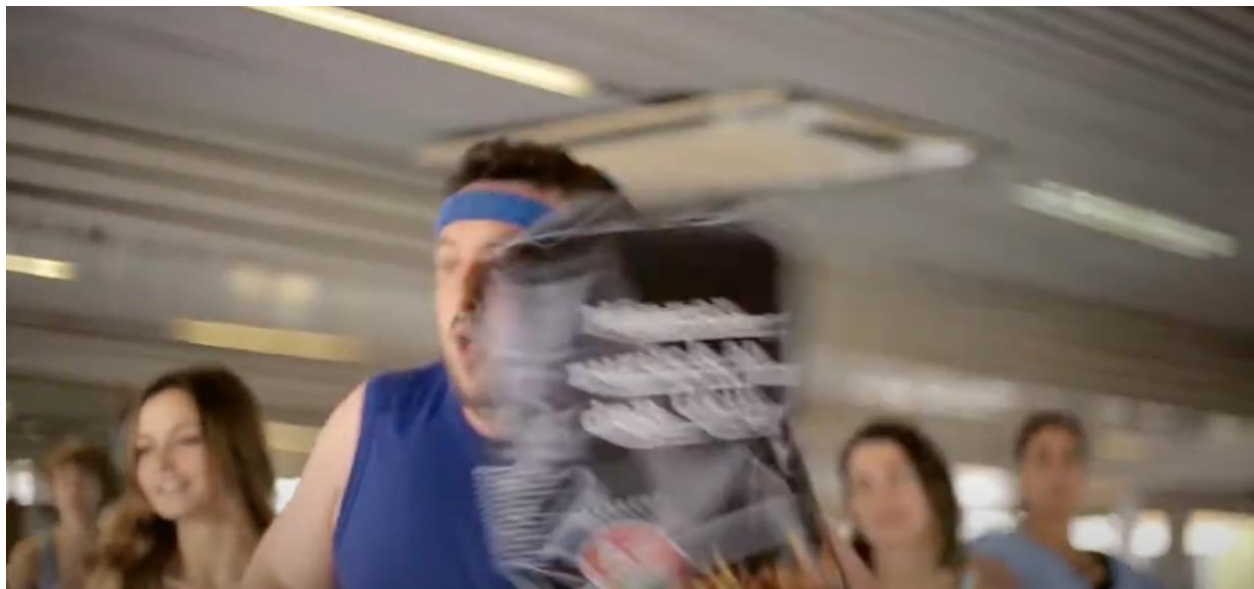


Figure 7 - Man being violently hit by a bag of coal with the quote "Men, go back to the grill" written on it

As previously discussed, men that do not ascribe to traditional values of hegemonic masculinity are often excluded, stigmatised and considered inferior to other men. For this reason, this particular type of masculinity is defined as subordinated by Connell (Connell mentioned in Demetrakis, 2014, p.343). Social punishment is often on the line when it comes to the experience of subordinated masculinities. In the advertisement, the social punishment is represented by the bag of coals that violently hits the men on their head and that supposedly carries society's judgement and expectations. Interestingly, the hit almost has a brainwashing effect on the men, who all seem to wonder – disoriented – what brought them to engage in feminine labelled activities in the first place, as if they had been brainwashed. This confusion and public humiliation is the consequence of the men not fulfilling the expectations of hegemonic masculinity. In fact, hegemonic masculinity can only be performed through the “exclusion and debasement of women as well as the homophobia that permeates the cultural site” (Dunbar, 1999, p.319). However, by listening to the Barbie song, waxing and practicing Zumba the men are positioning themselves closer to artefacts of female representation in our popular culture (Wright, 2003).

It is important to underline how the bag of coal presents itself as a punishment as soon as the men feel any type of comfort undertaking an activity such as Zumba. It is in fact a style of dance which, like others, tends to be feminised together with those who practise it. It is precisely this form of positive affect that requires drastic measures to bring the men “back on the right track”. To do so, the men are presented with the possibility to regain and reappropriate their manhood by “returning” to the grill and cooking meat, which would prove their virility since hegemonic masculinity heavily relies on the “domination and exploitation of others, including nature” (Rogers, 2008, p. 282). Despite the connection between animal and meat never being directly made in the advertisement, it is clear that inflicting domination onto another sentient being serves as a reinforcement of a man's masculinity.

5.3.2 Avoiding Competition

Barbie also plays an important role in the advert from meat brand Bell “Militär/Snacking”. In this case a young soldier is in a dormitory with his roommates. The boy is sitting on his bed while he is opening a package that can be assumed to have been sent to him by his family. The first thing he finds as he opens the package is a blonde Barbie in a pink dress. He looks at her in disbelief and humiliation as the comrades around laugh at him. He puts the Barbie to the side, looks in the package and sees that it is actually full of meat snacks such as salamis, salami sticks and beef jerky. Now he looks at the inside of the package with dreamy eyes as he smiles satisfied. In the final scene the boy leans against a bunk bed looking at the package of meat and then bites into a small salami, as he smiles and sighs in satisfaction.



Figure 8 - Military boy being laughed at by his roommates for receiving a Barbie doll

The military boy is mocked and marginalised by his companions as soon as they realise that a Barbie has been sent to him. In this case too, we witness a public punishment because he is associated with an object which is highly feminised and infantilised in our global culture. Here, however, the boy benefits from this marginalisation because it allows him not to reveal to his companions that in reality there is meat in his package. It is therefore a strategy that whoever sent the package is also upholding in order to provoke disgust and disinterest towards the package the young man received. The objective in this case is to avoid

competition with other military companions. Although it is not explicitly expressed in the advert, it is implied that if the boy's roommates had known that there was meat in the package, they would have behaved differently towards him. Although the competition for meat is not explicit in this commercial, it is precisely the attempt to avoid it that gives an indication of how the appropriation of meat is a theme that generates competition and rivalry.

The military environment is also used by supermarket Coop to promote meat – and in general the social activity of having a barbecue – as a predominantly male leisure activity. The captain stands in front of the crew and exhorts "Camarades, we have had a difficult week, enjoy your well-deserved holidays". He then calls them to attention for the final salute, to which the group of soldiers responds with the gesture of the hand turning from the palm to the back of the hand pointing towards the ground accompanied by the famous "tsch-tsch" sound. The commander smiles under his breath with a look of amused approval. While there is no meat present, this ad does a great job of advertising a sensation and an experience. In fact, it communicates that having a barbecue is the most satisfying activity there can be after a hard, tiring period. This message is reinforced by the coordinated and collective consensus of the entire military group.

The choice to use a military setting to promote meat is significant since in the Swiss context military service is still obligatory for all able-bodied men who have reached the age of 18. In Switzerland, therefore, the majority of men have done military service for a year and can empathise with the emotion of returning home for the weekend after a hard week of service. This advert therefore speaks to and for Swiss men, supporting the idea that meat consumption is what can reinvigorate them and, most importantly, that meat serves as a reward.

6. Sexist meat framing and male sexual prowess

Sexualising means “to make – something or someone – sexual and endow with a sexual character or cast” (Merriam Webster, 2023). In this chapter, I explore how Swiss meat advertisements heavily rely on

sexualised images of meat as well as portraying it as an inherently male product, that can enhance men's sexual appeal and prowess. In *The Pornography of Meat*, Adams (2020) explores the extent to which meat is promoted with explicit or implicit pornographic intentions and argues that “[p]leasurable consumption of consumable beings is the dominant perspective of our culture” (Adams, 2020, p.13).

Professor of environmental history Carolyn Merchant (1980, mentioned in Harrison, 2021) argues that the advance of industrialisation and humanism have led to a system where nature is viewed as a passive entity that humans can exploit. As a consequence, “through this process, notions of nature were relocated onto the female body, with femininity now perceived as passive, inert, irrational, and corporeal” (Merchant 1980 mentioned in Harrison, 2021, p.35). Both women and men can be associated with meat, but this happens in markedly different ways. When men are compared to meat with terms like “beefy” or “meaty” this is to describe their masculine strength. For women, on the other hand, the association is purely metaphorical, so we could say that “men are meat in the sense that meat is full of power, whereas women are meat in the sense that it is consumed as a statement of power” (Fiddes, 1989, p.177). As previously discussed, animals are often absent in popular culture surrounding meat. Adams (2010) developed the concept of the “absent referent” to describe this imagery void that makes animals invisible in the process of animal consumption. From a cultural standpoint, meat is a male identified object, while vegetables and other lower status foods – cereal, grains, nuts – are considered to be female (Adams, 2010). Therefore, advertisements for meat tend to be produced for the male gaze. Some of the images promoting meat can be interpreted as recalling heterosexual pornographic hints that use women's bodies to appeal to male viewers (Cudworth, 2010, p.12). I mainly discuss how female bodies are often made passive when meat is promoted, how meat is portrayed as a sexual object and how in light of this, meat is connected with male sexual prowess and dominance enhancement.

6.1.1 Massaging meat

In the advertisement “Grillitarian - Meat” a man stands in his garden and smiles contentedly as he shrugs his shoulders, looking as if he is giving a massage to someone. The camera moves away from him and frames his hands massaging a raw steak with his thumbs. Then a woman in a two piece swimming costume is framed lying on a deckchair, she lowers her sunglasses with a provocative look to ascertain what the man is doing. He satisfactorily turns to look at her and she turns her head away with a sexy smirk while placing her sunglasses back on. In the next scene the man is getting a steak at the Migros meat counter as he is advised by the Migros butcher. Throughout the commercial there is a narrating voice stating: “Grillitarians give their loved ones a lot of tenderness, because grillitarians appreciate the exquisite and tender cuts of meat from Migros. Migros, all for grillitarians.”

In this advertisement we see that the woman laying down interacts with her facial expression only. Arguably, there are two different interpretations for her body language. In both, meat is used as a cultural object to enhance men’s sexual prowess. First, the woman’s facial expression seems one of admiration towards the man’s manual skills. As she inspects him from above her glasses, she shows admiration and sexual excitement by how the man is massaging the meat. Secondly, another expression that transpires from her face is that of jealousy as she looks at him with an air of defiance. She looks like she is reprimanding the



Figure 9 - Man looking at the woman provocative way as he massages a steak

man for experiencing too much pleasure as he moves his thumbs through the steak. In other words, with that look she is communicating that this is the type of attention that he should be diverting to her, and not a piece of meat. However, both interpretations lead to a comparison between the piece of meat and the woman's body, with the result that the man is the one that can dominate and satisfy each of them due to his abilities of 'handling the flesh' with his hands.

In the ad, the woman's attire consisting of a bikini leaving her skin exposed is not a coincidence. In fact, the message of the advertisement would be altered if the woman was wearing clothes covering her entire body. Her semi-naked body serves the purpose of accommodating the "cultural dismemberment" of the female body in parts to allow its sexualisation. Whilst men are the consumers of these body parts, such as breasts, buttocks and hips (Harrison, 2021, p.36).



Figure 10 - Close-up of the man's hand massaging the steak



Figure 11 - Woman laying down and looking at the men massaging the meat provocatively

Another important aspect of the woman's body language is her passive position while she lies on the deckchair. This image reinforces the thesis proposed by Merchant (1980, mentioned in Harrison, 2021), who argued that nature's perceived passive essence – through the process of industrialisation – was transferred to femininity, which is now felt as passive, inert, irrational, and corporeal, while man is portrayed as active and attractive. Even when we see the man buying the meat at the supermarket, he is alone. This promotes the message that men are the one in charge of meat preparation – when it's outside of the house – while women are not involved in this process.

6.1.2 Soft and Juicy

Another example of how the media adopts techniques that sexualise meat and most importantly its consumption can be found in the Migros advertisement “The pleasure of taste” where a man and woman in their sixties sit facing each other at a large, round wooden table. From their environment, age and attire one can assume that they are wealthy. Both have a plate in front of them with a cut steak. The man begins by saying that biting this meat is like cornering on a 1200-cylinder motorbike. Then they both freeze; he with his forearms on the table, while she smiles slightly and holds her fork in mid-air. A man appears in a Migros butcher's uniform and addresses the viewer by saying: “Do you also want to have a ‘heavy ride’ with your flavour nerves? Just try this steak.” Then he approaches the woman and takes the fork she is holding in her hand, smells the piece of meat that was already skewered on it and goes “mmmh, strong smell of braised meat, chew the meat a little, let it lie on your tongue, what taste do you feel now? Sizzling oil, fat notes, mmmh here it is now, the 1200 cylinder bike.” He approaches the lady’s plate again and takes another piece of meat, eats it and then lowers himself towards the gentleman saying “now concentrate well on chewing, what sensation does it give on the tongue?” he smiles pleased and says “Soft and juicy. And now what note of flavour remains while you swallow? Caramel, pepper, desire for adventure. Simply enjoy the joy of flavour” the butcher concludes, raising his fork with a piece of meat in the air.

The whole time the butcher is describing the experience of eating the steak he keeps eye contact with the camera while he roams the room up and down. Interestingly, he is never facing the woman as he talks. Instead, his body is always directed to the camera but also to the man sitting at the table. Throughout the entire ad, the woman’s presence is almost superfluous. She only is essential when the butcher leans in to grab the fork that she is holding in her hand and when he serves himself from her plate twice. She is “frozen” so she cannot stop him from stealing from her plate. However, this dynamic reinforces the cultural idea that men are more deserving of meat than women are and therefore the latter should give up on it for men’s consumption (Lax & Mertig, 2020). This also has historical foundations, since during World War I women had to give up meat so that soldiers could still eat their portion when returning from combat (De Backer et

al., 2020). This ad is part of a series made by Migros that was presented to the public in different formats but with the same actors and in the exact same setting. The other version of this same piece of advertisement sees the woman and the man talking at the table and it becomes very clear that it was the woman who cooked the meat when she asks him “So, is it good?” and then the man proceeds to give the exact same experience description that the butcher gives in the version previously described.

The metaphorical language of the two men comparing the experience of eating a piece of meat with an adventurous race on a 1200 cylinder bike is also heavily charged with values of masculinity. This is one additional indication of how advertisers specifically frame their wording purposefully for the major target for the products they are trying to sell. The sensory experience of eating meat is also strongly romanticised to the point that it hints at sexual pleasure and adventure. Some expressions like “heavy ride”, which in the ad is purposefully used in English, can also be interpreted with the sexual connotation that the word “riding” has when it does not refer to sports of riding horses or motorbikes (Urban Dictionary, 2023). The use of words like “juicy and soft” paired with the repeated moans of the butcher to signal pleasure of consuming the steak can also be read as sexually charged. In general, the pathos and excitement used when describing the meat, frames it as something irresistible. And along with being irresistible, the message is that it is men who are the masters, judges and experts of this “irresistible” object of consumption which is meat.

6.1.3 When Men Know ‘Their Meat’

Meat is not only sexualised as a cultural object of consumption. In fact, the experienced knowledge of meat is also heavily sexualised. Men who “know how to handle meat” are considered attractive by our society that places high values on male dominance, power and sexual prowess, which are heavily linked with the concept of hegemonic masculinity.

One example of this is the advertisement “Migros-Owner: Meat Counter with Dry-Aged”. A white woman in her sixties is holding her purse in front of her body as she looks at the butcher behind the Migros meat

display case. She looks at him admiringly as he serves another male customer who has his back to her and the camera. The lady stops a younger woman to tell her how well this butcher does his job and how proud she is of him for the excellent advice he gives to customers. These are her words “Isn't he doing a great job?? So clever, so skillful, so loving, aaaaw, and now you must look, the counselling... Super! I am really proud of him!”. The young woman smiles and asks her “Are you the mother?” to which the older woman replies with a little embarrassment “No, I am a Migros owner”. The narrative voice closes the ad by saying “Migros belongs to the people, so they are especially proud of their competent butchers”. We never hear the butcher speaking, but we can tell that he is speaking with the male customer that he is serving. His posture is confident as he smiles throughout the entire ad.

In this ad, great importance is given to the competence of the butcher, which is described as skilful, loving and clever for having particular knowledge about meat. Most importantly, these adjectives highlight the way in which he handles meat and the technique that he uses. What makes him attractive and worth watching in the older woman's eyes is not necessarily his appearance, but rather his knowledge and expertise of meat. The woman's dreamy sighs, her words and her gaze that remains fixed on the butcher the whole time are a strong indicator that she finds him attractive for what he does and how he does it, not for who he is. The embarrassment that the older woman feels when the young girl asks her if the butcher is her son is also a strong indicator of how the attention and thoughts the woman is having about the butcher are charged with an admiration that she could never address to a son because they are charged with sexual connotations. Moreover, this advertisement uses the image of the middle-aged woman who regains her sexual desire thanks to a young man's sexual prowess.



Figure 12 - Middle aged woman looks at a young butcher admiringly as a younger woman standing next to her looks surprised

In this case, the young man is attractive precisely because he has specific knowledge and techniques for dealing with the flesh of animals. Meat and masculinity have historically been connected, but this ad also illustrates how meat has a great impact on attractiveness, both for men and for women. In fact, omnivorous men tend to be preferred because they appear more masculine than males that decide to give up meat for a vegetarian diet (Timeo & Suitner, 2018). This idea is also vastly popularised in men's lifestyle magazines, where being a carnivore is labelled as "one of the attributes of an ideal man, primarily through increased muscle strength" (Rothgerber, 2013, p. 2).

Even competitor Coop often puts the figure of the butcher – always a man – at the centre of the promotion of its meat products. For example, in a commercial, butcher Armin is introduced as he descends the escalator in the background while another Coop employee explains that Armin has a special sense of smell for the village barbecues. In the next scenes, Armin walks around his village and recognises what his fellow villagers are grilling without physically seeing what is actually on the grill. Sniffing through the hedge of the Gerber house, he can tell that they are eating a pepper steak. He then continues walking with his nose

up and heads towards Peter's house at the risk of being run over by a car, as if the meat smell is hypnotising him. He recognises that Peter is grilling chicken that is burning because he is distracted by his new “flame”, which is a girl. In the following scene, we see Peter and his girlfriend walking towards the counter of the butcher Armin, who greets them by handing Peter a bag containing chicken. The butcher looks at the boy and mimes the gesture of turning the meat with his hand, making the sound “tsch tsch” with his mouth. Then he looks at the boy with a smirk and briefly turns his eyes to the girl as if to say “Do not let your new flame distract you this time”.

I want to focus on the role the girl plays in the commercial. Although we know the names of all the characters, she is the only one who is never called by name. She is referred to as Peter's “flame” by the narrator as we see some chicken thighs burning on the grill. It is therefore implied that she is the girl whose charm has distracted Peter from turning the chicken. In the advertisement as a whole, the girl is always smiling and has a dreamy, bamboozled look as she looks at Peter's face. The girl is therefore nothing more than an “accompanying” character, a figure who is there but not really there, although the narrative of Peter's story is built around her existence, or rather her being a distraction for the proper cooking of the chicken. It is also important to reflect on the importance of this mistake made by Peter within the advertisement. The hints Armin gives the boy, coupled with the sly look cast at the girl, suggest that somehow, that chicken grilled the right way might improve the course of the relationship for the couple, or even increase the attraction the girl might feel for him. To sum up, besides promoting the idea of the butcher man who is an expert on meat, and that a man must be able to grill meat without getting distracted, the message that meat can serve as a tool to conquer a woman is also strong.

6.1.4 Women, Keep Your Hands Off the Grill!

In the Migros advertisement “Is barbecuing teamwork?” a smiling and happy man is grilling in his garden; an orange banner bears his words “There is only one boss at the grill”. His female companion approaches him and puts her arm on his shoulder as she sprinkles some spices onto the meat. The man is very unnerved

by the intrusion of his companion and rolls his eyes. She pulls the tongs out of his hands and smiles. The narrator concludes by saying: “Everyone has their own barbecue rules. Everyone knows one: Grillitarians benefit at Migros”. Studies show that barbecues are highly gendered social events. In fact, a clear division of tasks is in place, often reflecting hierarchies (Dacin et al., 2010). This division usually promotes gender segregation and the invisibility of the work performed by women (Fletcher, 1999). Men tend to be involved in starting the fire and then stand in front of the grill while the meat cooks, whereas women prepare the side dishes such as salads and other vegetables.

With its title “Is barbecuing teamwork?”, the ad already sheds light on the fact that working as a team to grill meat could potentially be wrong or problematic. Teamwork is usually framed as something positive. Whilst in this ad, collaborating is framed as something negative that can ruin the final outcome of the barbecue. The man’s body language as he rolls his eyes unnerved are a clear indicator of this. The woman’s help or collaboration is framed as an ‘intrusion’ in what is considered to be a man’s area of “expertise”.



Figure 13 - Man with an unnerved expression because his partner spices the meat

Other contemporary culture examples of the alleged hardship experienced by men, is the German podcast “BEEF! Männer kochen anders” or “BEEF! Men cook differently” of the magazine of the same name which sells in Switzerland, Germany and Austria. An episode aired in 2018 and titled “She wants to roll along, no need to panic!” aims to explain to men how to handle a woman who wants to participate in the barbecue. The chief editor Jan Spielhagen (2018) asserts that a woman who wants to participate in the grilling comes as the “biggest challenge of all in barbecuing”. He particularly refers to the fact that as a man, you have everything planned for the evening and “you are convinced that you will be the director of the evening”, until she offers her help. The chief redactor proceeds to advise the man to play the role of the “cautious and supporting coach that has to intervene every now and then”. However, when at the end of the barbecue the woman will ask how she has performed, the man should not show his disappointment, but rather dismiss the things that went wrong and praise the positive ones. He then concludes by suggesting offering the woman “private grilling school” in order to improve the grilling results and to secure future dates (Spielhagen, 2018).

The same narrative excluding women and femininity from the social activity of grilling is also present in one Coop advertisement titled “The Best”. In the first scene of the ad, the camera films a close-up frame of a piece of meat sizzling on a grill. As the camera moves away from the grill, the narrator’s voice exclaims “grilling is for everyone!” as we see that the person standing behind the grill is a middle-aged white woman wearing an apron and turning the meat with tongs. A man dressed in a suit then comes into the frame and agitatedly says “this is wrong, you need more experience for this!” while pointing his index finger to the woman. To which the narrator replies “wrong, you only need a grill for this” as the woman shakes her head bringing her attention back to the grill. The man’s ‘intrusion’ is unexpected and his strong gestures almost make him feel like a fictional character, not like a person that would actually be present in that setting. For these reasons, I believe that his character serves to express the mainstream opinion on women barbecuing.



Figure 14 - Man reprimands a woman who is grilling because in his opinion she does not have enough experience

Here I won't digress into the topic of mansplaining and belittling women on their physical and mental capacities displayed in the advert. However, the stereotype of women being essentially inadequate for barbecuing is strongly reinforced in this ad by the man practically shouting at her that more experience is required to grill. The – male – narrator's voice saying that "the only thing needed to barbecue is a grill" is a scarce attempt at trying to debunk the stereotypical message that was communicated in the first place. The underlying assumption is that men hold a particular knowledge about meat and its preparation that women can't have access to, even if these women are in their fifties and supposedly have had plenty of life experiences.

Additionally, the narrator's attempt of contradicting the expressed stereotype is an end in itself. In the following scenes, the location changes and we see a balding man in the supermarket consulting the butcher at the Coop. The man then stands in his garden, holds the meat in his hands in front of his face and admires it, smiling. After grilling the meat, he lifts it with tongs and notices that there are 3 people – two women and one man – looking at his meat through the garden hedge with a fascinated expression. He looks at them

satisfied for making them jealous. Apart from the first scene where the woman is berated for not having enough barbecue experience, the woman is absent in the rest of the commercial. The man becomes the star of the advertisement and also the expert hero of grilling meat. The character of the woman solely served the purpose of portraying someone that the viewer would recognise as having no experience barbecuing.

The nearly anxiety-provoking ‘intrusion’ of women in the activity of barbecuing confirms the gendering that meat as an object of consumption and preparation undergoes. Contemporary literature stresses how this dichotomy is also ruled by the separation of care-oriented activities that are mainly women’s responsibility and leisure-oriented activities that tend to be men dominated (Szabo, 2013). When referring to the kitchen, women are more likely to fulfil the duty of taking care of the cooking during “normal meals”. Men instead, prefer to show off their skills at social events involving guests, barbecues and weekend occasions. Sharing duties when barbecuing also represents an attack on men’s domination over meat preparation as a cultural object and practice. In fact, when men fulfill cooking tasks, they favour the “hypermasculine display of meat preparation” which happens in public and often requires the use of fire (Sobal, 2005, p.144). In other words, if men are deprived from the full dominance and control over meat in the particular social event of a barbecue, they are disoriented as to what social script they are supposed to follow in order to present an “appropriate” display of their masculinity.

6.1.5 More is More

In this advertisement a man is in the Migros supermarket in front of the meat display case where a butcher is preparing to cut him a piece of meat. The man is wearing casual pants with a blue shirt. He wears glasses, has little and fine hair. He does not represent the typical attractive masculine man that ads typically promote. The man keeps prompting the butcher to cut off a bigger piece with soft mouth sounds, hand gestures and shaking his head when he is not satisfied with the size. When the measure pleases him, he points his index finger at the butcher as if to say “that is right”. Once the man is satisfied, the man’s thoughts are supported

by an orange banner and a narrating voice stating that “Everything under five centimetres, is carpaccio”. The man then awkwardly and exaggeratedly reaches out to take his wrapped piece of meat from the butcher’s hands.

In modern society, the selection and purchase of a “good” piece of meat “may still be seen as the model duty of the man of the house, particularly for special occasions, ritually affirming his status” (Fiddes, 1989, p.180) and also as a way of maintaining their traditional hunter roles, whereas women maintain their foraging roles by providing the rest of the food (Fiddes, 1989). In this commercial we see how the abundance of meat is framed as something positive and necessary for a man’s consumption. More precisely, this abundance of meat is connected specifically with red meat, which is the category of meat to be more highly associated with manliness and masculine qualities (Fiddes, 1989; Rozin et al., 2012). As the quintessential representation of flesh, a beef steak has the potential to convey potent sensual cues. It is customary that the bigger and more succulent the piece of meat, the more robust and virile one may be perceived as a consumer and as a man. Meat is widely acknowledged to awaken passionate desires, especially in males. The provocation being predominantly of an instinctive nature rather than an explicitly erotic one as it is not commonly regarded as an aphrodisiac or a remedy for waning libido (Twigg, 1983, p.24).

Using the example of the carpaccio dish as one that wouldn’t be satisfying for the customer, is also significant from a gender perspective. In fact, the dish consists of thinly sliced red beef meat accompanied with capers, onions and is eaten raw. The dish first originated in Italy in 1950, when the restaurant owner Cipriani, had to cook something for the countess Amalia Nani Mocenigo, who had just been diagnosed with a rare disease that would not allow her to eat cooked meat (Ciccarelli, 2023). He came up with this thinly sliced raw meat dish that quickly became popular. We cannot know whether Cipriani would have created the same dish if it had been requested by a man, but we know that this is what he created having an ill woman in mind. The presentation, perceived elegance and sophistication of a carpaccio strongly go against the idea of a big, juicy piece of steak that is considered manly. Moreover, the quantity of meat present in a

carpaccio is a lot less than the amount there is in a steak, confirming that the abundance of meat is an important aspect for men who want to prove their masculinity.

Another example of the portrayal of how male dominance is framed in relation to meat in Swiss advertisements comes from the Coop commercial “Find YOUR right piece of meat” in which a kitchen counter with plenty of vegetables overlooks a fuming grill visible from the kitchen window. Then, a man leans down and looks at meat cuts from the meat counter at Coop supermarket. The face of this man has an expression of amazement and awe as the Coop butcher holds a big piece of meat in the air as coloured lights illuminate the man’s face creating a fairy-tale effect. The man is then in his garden, the grill is on but he leans down to the piece of meat placed on the table and admires it closely. Then he drizzles it with olive oil, salt and herbs and massages it with his hands. He holds the raw steak in his hands, smelling it as he defiantly looks over at the neighbour’s dog and drops the steak on the grill while the dog whines because it has been denied a piece of the raw meat. The man then raises the cooked steak to the sky with his tongs and looks at it as he smiles happily.

The centrepiece of this commercial is clearly a large raw steak that is often filmed with close-up frames. This type of filming frame is widely used in food visuals and “can evoke your other senses so that you can imagine the aroma, the taste, and the feel of biting into it or having it in your mouth” (Canon, 2019). This is a common technique used to make food look ‘sexy’ and is widely used in social media under the hashtag



Figure 15 - man looking at the steak with admiration as he spices it up

‘foodporn’ when users share mouth-watering dishes (Mejova & Abbar, 2016). The sexual allusions are even more evident when the man sprinkles the oil on the raw meat moving in slow motion, then gently massaging it with his thumbs and whipping it with a bunch of fresh herbs. The man's body language is also significant for the image one wants to convey of the flesh. During almost the entire commercial, the man stoops down to look at it closely with his eyes wide with admiration, holds the meat with both hands and towards the end raises it towards the sky almost in veneration. It is clear that the aim of this commercial is to portray meat as an absolutely irresistible and seductive food.

The narrator's deep, masculine voice accompanies the entire commercial. The wording and the heroic background music used is also particularly significant to the construction and reinforcement of the association between masculinity and meat. These are the words used by the narrator “Now is your time to grill. Not with just any meat, find a piece of meat that deserves you. Get everything out of it, drive your neighbour’s dog to despair. Summer is made on the grill. Now it's ‘tsch-tsch’. Coop, for me and you”. The phrase “find a piece of meat that deserves you” is particularly significant in this context as it fuels the message that it is the meat that has to live up to the human consumer, who is therefore in total supremacy over the meat and can select, dominate and consume it at will. It also conveys the sense that animals are happy to become food for consumers, and that having access to meat that is satisfying is a sacred right of every man. Or possibly worse, that animals somewhat have to deserve becoming “the right” piece of meat for men. Similarly, the expression “get everything out of it” is a strong hint of the exploitation and domination imposed on nature by the patriarchal and capitalist system that relies on a never-ending exploitation of Earth’s natural resources with the sole thought of profit, and in this case for the brief pleasure of consuming a piece of meat.

The interesting gaze challenge between the dog and the man who is about to grill the meat is also a clear example of how access and domination over meat is hierarchical and men are believed to be more entitled to access it. In fact, in the commercial, it is suggested to “make the neighbour’s dog jealous with the scent of the meat” which subtly confirms that it is humans, and more specifically men, that dominate the top of

the food chain. This “challenge” is obviously won by the man – or by the human being – due to a clear disparity of means. From the satisfied and contented expression of the man it is clear that being able to maintain complete control and possession over the meat gives him great satisfaction. Furthermore, this “challenge” with the dog can also be read as yet another manifestation of the dominion that human and men exercises over nature and other animals. Finally, in this commercial the meat almost acquires a mystical aura that portrays it as an absolutely irresistible food, the consumption of which is nothing more than a natural visceral instinct to which no control can be put except with the consumption of the meat itself.

The Coop supermarket “That's what a Barbecue summer sounds like: on the railroad track” ad is also a perfect example of how the image of meat is portrayed as evoking a gut instinct that awakens the senses. A man in a suit and a briefcase is on the platform of the Chur station as he chases a departing train without success. He stands on the platform out of breath watching the train pull away. He starts to see – imaginary – smoke coming out of the train tracks that also sound as if it were a steam train. There are illustrations imitating the smoke coming out of the rails and that smoke then turns into the words “tsch tsch”. The man looks on with a furrowed brow and a confused expression, then suddenly starts to smile possessed and his pupils turn into orange flames with the words “tsch tsch” in them.



Figure 16 - Man is obsessed by the idea of having a barbecue

In the next scene the man is happily grilling and turns to his female partner to hand her a plate with some meat. In this case too, the uncontrollable desire for meat appears as a sudden, natural and uncontrollable desire and fantasy that can only be satisfied with the preparation and consumption of meat.

6.1.6 (Un)Sustainable Women

In *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Plumwood (1993) criticises the “master model” of Western culture which relies on the alienation from nature and its resulting domination. The identity of the master – those who hold the power – thrives and assumes a “dualized structure of otherness and negation” (Plumwood, 1993, p.42). In other words, one’s nature is structured in opposing manners through the exclusion of attributes that overlap with the other.

Consequently, the subordinate characteristics are defined in relation to the prevailing features, which are elevated to primacy and domination (Plumwood, 1993). Common examples of paired dualism can be reason/nature, culture/nature, male/female, rationality/animality, civilised/primitive, public/private, subject/object (Plumwood 1993 in Gaard, 1997). The effect of this polarity is that of naturalising domination and to make this oppositional dualism the very notion that defines the nature of the subordinate and the dominant. As a consequence, this order of things and of “being” is perceived as natural and as inevitable (Ruether, 1974). Similarly, the historical domination of cis white Western masculinity is the unit in relation to which differing identities are constructed, leaving cis white masculinity in a position of hegemony.

Ecofeminists understand this dualism as the root of all oppression and believe that an intersectional approach is primal for understanding that the patriarchal setting goes beyond the oppression of certain human groups, but that its foundation relies on the domination of nonhuman animals and nature (Trapara, 2017). On this subject, ecofeminist philosopher Lori Gruen claims that subordinated categories such as “animal” and “women” directly serve the symbolic purpose in patriarchal societies. In fact, the manner in which animals and women are fashioned as the subordinate, submissive “other”, has perpetuated the

prevalence of human male dominance (Gruen, 2018). In this section I explore how Swiss media exploits the association between nature and femininity to promote alleged sustainable products.

In the Migros advertisement “Sustainable fish and the world’s most sustainable retailer” a man in his sixties stands in front of the fish display case of the Migros supermarket. A young woman with short hair and with a trolley sees him from a distance and makes an enthusiastic gasp as she approaches the man and asks him if she can show him something or if he is just watching. The man looks at her in surprise, looks at the display case and then at the girl again and says “I’m looking for sustainable fish”. The girl enthusiastically exclaims “ah!”, and leans forward to point at some fish while saying “at the moment we would have this, this, this, this, this is also sustainable, this...” she is interrupted by the man who says “so every fish?” the girl smiles, shrugs and says “well, yes...” and she continues to smile shyly as she holds her hands in front of her body.

The image of the nurturing, caring and ready-to-help woman is very well portrayed here with the woman being unusually eager to help the man with his shopping. The woman’s character is also used to frame the supermarket as being the most sustainable and the provider of sustainable fish. In fact, the woman’s appearance is constructed in a way that would make the viewer trust her ‘sustainability advice’. She is wearing a denim jacket and three layered necklaces with a feather and a black diamond that can suggest attachment to nature and spirituality. Moreover, she wears very short hair. In our modern society, women’s hairstyle choices can still impact how others perceive them and alter their access to power depending on whether the hairstyle conforms to societal expectations (Weitz, 2001). In this case, the short hair can serve

to frame the character of the woman that does not follow gender imposed hairstyle stereotypes of short/long hair.



Figure 17 - Smiling woman points to all the sustainable fish in the display case

Her body language is also conforming to Western expectations of women's complacent attitude; she is smiling and nodding throughout the entire commercial. Additionally, fish and white meat tend to be highly associated with femininity. Women's magazines suggest this meat intake is favourable for women as it is alleged to be more "healthy and lean" (Nungesser & Winter, 2021, p.115). This further supports the stereotype that this woman's expertise in fish sustainability is "natural" and "normal".

This type of advertisement is misleading the consumer into believing that sustainability can go along with fish or meat farming. The meat and dairy industry do not show the reality of animals being held captive and killed for our consumption. Instead, the consumer is shown an image of the animal "which is always fabricated in that the referent for meat is the image of living, happy animals on a pasture" (Trapara, 2017, p.50) or are instead completely absent. In the case of this fish advertisement, the consumer does not directly

see “happy fish”, but is conditioned to think that this fish has been treated more humanely and with a greater respect for the environment due to its labelling of “sustainable fish”. Through claims of ‘sustainability’ the consumer satisfies their desire to believe they are a good person, because “the structure of the absent referent, in which the animal disappears both literally and conceptually, allows them to believe that they are good people.” (Adams, 2010, p.232). The consumer is therefore led to “ethical” consumption which indirectly makes its purchase in

[...] bad faith: rather than recognising they are exploiting or killing an animal needlessly, they are encouraged to believe they are good person who is consuming “healthy” and “happy” products, which in turn is seen as healthy for the consumer as well (Trapara, 2017, p.54).

These communication techniques are unfair to the consumer who thinks he or she is making a good choice, but they are even more unfair to animals and the environment because they are the one suffering the most from such misleading messages.

6.2 Male Sexual Prowess and Veganism

Vegetarianism or veganism is often associated with women and femininity. Multiple studies across the globe show that women are more likely to reduce their meat intake (Kubberød et al., 2002; Boek et al., 2012; Modlinska et al., 2020; Ritzel & Mann, 2021) and are reported to have greater concerns for the environment (Das et al., 2021). Marketing strategies make use of this gap, linking women and femininity with giving up meat or a reduction of its consumption. In this section, I discuss two Swiss advertisements that explicitly make use of this gap and discuss the possible consequences. The first commercial I consider was created by Coop and is titled or “For me and you. And Darko”. In this section I analyse seconds 17 up to 37 of the commercial as they are the significant ones with regards to the theme of meat absenteeism and how it is connected with femininity. In a second step, I explore the same topic which is also present in the “Product idea” advertisement of the Migros supermarket.

6.2.1 “Meat never did it for me”

The commercial “for me and for you. And for Darko” follows Darko’s adventures at the grill. In the scenes preceding the ones that interest us for this section we see Darko who always manages to pull a trick out of his hat and prepare the perfect meat-based barbecue for any audience. Darko arrives at his roommate’s party where only women are present. He is about to make the same move of opening his jacket and revealing a slew of sausages stacked inside as he previously did with his football teammates but all the girls stop and look at him cross-eyed while eating raw vegetable skewers and holding raw vegetables in their hands. He looks towards the grill and sees that there are only vegetables on it, so he closes his jacket insecurely. This leads Darko to go back to Coop to adapt to the dietary preferences of the group. He determinedly walks between the fruit and vegetable aisle. The focus shifts to the Coop employee, who says that at Coop there is a wide choice of vegetarian and vegan options for the grill and that therefore “Darko can please just about everyone”. Darko then returns to the “women-only barbecue” and cuts an aubergine in half and seasons it. He brings the grilled aubergine to the table and exclaims “Meat never really did it for me!” while the women look at him admiringly as he stands above them and they look up to him.



Figure 18 - Darko serves the aubergine to the girls who look at him with admiration

In this ad we see how vegetables and a plant-based diet are exclusively associated with women and femininity and how meat is considered the norm. In fact, Darko's assumption is that since he is going to attend a barbecue, meat will be the centrepiece of the event. However, when Darko is confronted with the fact that his roommate's barbecue does not include meat, he suddenly finds himself having to change his attitude towards meat and vegetables. The girls initially greet Darko with a disapproving look that makes Darko feel insecure about the situation. It will therefore be necessary for Darko to adapt to the women's group in terms of food choices in order to have access to the company of the women's group.

This ad is based on gender and sexist stereotypes. First, it supports the idea that only women eat vegetables and can follow a meat-free diet. Furthermore, the cold attitude with which women welcome Darko fuels the stereotype of the vegan/vegetarian person negatively judging and excluding anyone who does not follow their same diet. In addition to the insecurity shown by Darko's body language, the narrator increases the dose by saying that "only with his roommate's friends did he feel a little... insecure". This insecurity stands in opposition to the great self-confidence Darko has expressed during meat-centred barbecues with his colleagues, family and friends. This uncertainty is a manifestation of the subversion of order Darko is confronted with. Or that of not being able to surprise and conquer the diners by preparing meat. Indeed, Darko quickly realises that if he uses the same strategies used with his friends and colleagues, he would get just the opposite result. Ultimately, the only way Darko can "conquer" the girls is to provide some vegetables for the grill, and then pretend that he never really liked meat.



Figure 19 – Group of girls greets Darko with a displeased look while some of them are holding raw vegetables

This commercial therefore promotes the message that for a man the renunciation of meat is encouraged only if it is repaid with access to female bodies and company – in this case in terms of companionship – and attention. In addition to the girls’ companionship, the lie told by Darko makes him immediately fascinating and attractive in the eyes of women who now look at him with wide eyes and a dazed smile. Finally, the representation that vegetables have in this advertisement is also dubious. A woman is shown holding a skewer of raw vegetables and biting into it. Another girl instead bites into a raw carrot with the green foliage still attached to it. No effort is made to dispel the myth that “vegetables are boring” or that “vegans only eat raw vegetables”. Quite the opposite in fact, since very little is made to actually showcase alternatives meat products that have gained an increasingly large market share in the Swiss food industry over the last decade (Swissinfo, 2020).

6.2.2 My Girlfriend Thinks I'm a Vegetarian

A similar narrative is used in the “Product idea” advertisement by Migros. In this commercial from a young man in his thirties approaches what appears to be the Migros info point. A female employee wearing the typical orange uniform is typing at the keyboard and greets him with a smile. He introduces himself by saying that his name is Nico Keller and continues with “You probably already know me, I am a new Migros owner”. The woman looks at him dazed and frowns. Nico leans in with his torso as if making a confession and says “My new girlfriend is a vegetarian, and she thinks I am too” gritting his teeth, widening his eyes with the face of someone who knows he is in trouble. He looks quickly to the side and leans even closer to the woman, “But I am not” he confesses clenching his teeth even more. He then steps back and enthusiastically says “So I was thinking, why could we not make a product that looks like vegetables but is actually meat?”. The Migros employee silently reflects on this question and holds her breath. The man continues “I mean, it works the other way around too”. The woman smiles shyly to humour him as he smiles and walks away.

Here too, a disloyal and insincere attitude is promoted and justified to gain female approval. In fact, Nico pretends to adopt a meatless diet to gain his new girlfriend’s approval, which is a vegetarian. The stereotype of the man who cannot and does not want to give up meat emerges strongly, and who is therefore willing to lie to his partner in order to keep meat in his diet. Numerous studies find this same reluctance of men to give up meat in order to maintain their masculinity intact (De Backer et al., 2020). I believe the man in this ad is using “fake” vegetarian products to boost his sexual prowess in the eyes of his girlfriend. But the fact that he does it solely for this purpose leads me to assume that he has no intention whatsoever and that this attitude only aims at giving a version of himself that according to him will be accepted by his girlfriend.

6.2.3 Vegan Queerness

Among all the meat advertisements analysed, the representation of family units that differ from the traditional one consisting of a mother, a father and children is completely absent. However, there is an

exception represented by the Migros commercial, in which a boy is sitting on the kitchen counter with his back hunched holding a pack of vegan schnitzel from V-love – vegan product line from Migros – while his companion is emptying a bag of groceries. The boy asks his partner whether one is allowed to eat meat substitutes on Good Friday. His companion replies that he can eat whatever he wants. However, the boy is confused and again asks “but, can we?” and the companion replies “Well, it’s not meat...”. The boy looks at the V-love package dumbfounded and says, looking at his partner, “...yes, but it tastes like meat”. Then an inscription appears on the screen “We don’t know this either”.

The two boys are also present in other advertising campaigns and although their relationship is not explicitly defined, it is clear that they are very close and that they probably live together and have a relationship. We therefore have an example of queerness associated with meat only with vegan products that imitate the texture and taste of meat. Unlike the other commercials where an important physical presence of the characters stands out, the posture of the boy who asks himself questions is curved and not very imposing. His attitude is also very insecure towards this meat substitute, which was not observed in the other characters who were confronted with meat, quite the opposite.

Conclusion

This research project aimed to identify how meat consumption is framed as a gendered type of consumption in Swiss televised advertising. The leading research question was the following:

How does the portrayal of carnism in Swiss televised advertising from 2012 to 2023 contribute to the gendering of meat consumption?

To answer the main research question, I combine it with the following sub-research questions to give a more satisfying and complete response:

How are gender roles performed in Swiss televised meat advertising from 2012 to 2023, especially with regards to the preparation and consumption of meat?

How do Swiss televised meat advertising from 2012 to 2023 promote a heteronormative ideal of meat consumption?

Based on a critical ecofeminist and gender performativity analysis, it can be concluded that gender is a key element used by Swiss supermarkets to promote and sell meat products. The results indicate that meat advertising frames meat consumption as inherently male and therefore as a natural and necessary food type for men. Distinctive elements of hegemonic masculinity such as control and domination of nature and animal bodies, a – conscious or unconscious – suppression of emotions, a prevalence of competitiveness rather than communal growth, and finally a rejection of any association with the feminine world emerge consistently in the corpus analysed.

Ultimately, the common message that these adverts communicate, some explicitly, others more subtly, is that “real men eat meat” and that they cannot in any way resist it. In other words, it is communicated that meat consumption is second nature to men because it is an object of consumption that defines and enhances their masculinity. As per Sobal (2005, pp.137-8) My research also recognizes a hypermasculinization of meat coupled with the idea that a meal must include meat to be a “real meal”.

Women generally play a silent and passive role in adverts promoting meat. This dynamic is reinforced with the dichotomy between inner and outer space. Women tend to have a meat-preparing role that is confined within the home, whereas men are better represented outside performing leisure activities. In the specific case of advertisements promoting barbecues, women are in charge of the preparation of side dishes consisting of vegetables and cereals. Women are therefore marginal in meat advertisements in which men are the protagonists and often the heroes.

Within the selected advertisements it is noted that there is a greater presence of male characters for the promotion of meat. When female characters are included, they often play a purely supporting role to the male figure. Women often do not speak, are not addressed and serve as side characters. This issue is directly linked to the fact that it is only male characters who are portrayed as experts in meat and its preparation,

thus reinforcing the idea that a man must know how to control and handle animal meat. This male expertise often tends to be staged with the support of female figures, who are either rebuked for their lack of ability to cook meat or are portrayed as admirers of this male competence when it comes to cooking it. It can therefore be assumed that the flesh and the control over it is represented as a key to female bodies, as it would serve to enhance men's sexual prowess by making them more attractive and virile.

In fact, the image of a woman admiring a man's ability to handle flesh is often proposed. Flesh is thus given a central role in the success of a heterosexual couple as it is framed as a means of courtship and conquest in the hands of men. As also discussed by Cudworth (2010, p.12), when meat is shown as irresistible, it is often also sexualized and discussed in terms or words with clear sexual connotations. On some occasions, women's bodies are also sexualized in conjunction with meat, conveying the message that the female body as well as meat are objects of consumption for men. In fact, the renunciation of meat by men is only promoted when this allows them to gain access to women's bodies or company. As stipulated by Fiddes (1989, p.177), my research also confirms that both male and female bodies are associated with flesh. However, this happens in a clearly different way, since for men this association guarantees them strength, charm and virility, while for women it means comparison and devaluation to an object of consumption for male pleasure.

Last but not least, the third research sub-question addressed topics that do not get enough attention in Swiss meat advertising:

How are animal rights and the environment – or climate impact – portrayed in Swiss televised advertisements about meat from 2012 to 2023?

Within the selected corpus, animal welfare or environmental protection are not thematised in any way. Meat is promoted as an object of consumption associated with positive emotions such as harmonious togetherness, pleasure, enjoyment and romantic conquest. The animal is insistently present on a material

level in the form of dissected meat, but the figure of the living animal is completely obscured and not brought out in any way. These communicative techniques fit in with Carol J. Adams' (2010) concept of the "absent referent", which stipulates that imagery void that makes animals invisible in the process of animal consumption.

When a supposed sustainability of meat products is promoted, as well as a vegan and vegetarian diet, we see women as the protagonists of these promotional messages. It almost seems as if such values can only be credible when impersonated by female characters. When male figures are associated with a vegetarian or vegan diet, it is because they are pushed or even forced by female partners or acquaintances. Plant foods and the renunciation of meat are thus highly associated with femininity and in one particular case with queerness. It therefore seems that women carry on their shoulders the responsibility of being the engine of a more sustainable world, even though they are often mocked for it. This fits with what was stated by Potts (2010), that is that ideologies such as vegetarianism and veganism are much more subject to stigmatization and ridicule by the dominant culture. I do not think it is a coincidence that this roles are performed by women or men who represent groups most subject to stigma in today's western society. I therefore conclude that both the existence of the animal and the environmental impact are omitted in favour of the emotional gain offered to the potential meat consumer.

With my research, I hope to have helped bring attention to how gender roles promoted in adverts related to meat consumption are a fundamental element to consider in trying to build a more sustainable future. Forthcoming research on this topic would benefit from a broader analysis of other meat producers in Switzerland, which were not taken into consideration in this research due to space and time limitations. Furthermore, the framing of vegan products and personalities is a topic that has only been touched upon marginally and that certainly requires more exploration.

In a utopian vision of the future, the discussion around meat consumption will be rewritten by removing the element of meat consumption as decisive for the perception of an individual's masculinity. It is therefore important that efforts to redefine what it means to "be a man" that are currently underway continue, in order

to critically think and deconstruct the supposed characteristics of a “real man”. In fact, this would not only bring an advantage in terms of gender equality but would also have a huge impact on the environment and on CO₂ emissions, since as individuals we would not be inclined to associate our consumption of meat as a determining element of how we perform our gender.

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