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## **Embodiment of the Manhood in Folklore: Keeping Secret from Women in Azerbaijan in the Context of a Real and Virtual Social Environment**

**Abstract:** This article investigates reasons for keeping secrets from women in real and virtual social environment of Azerbaijan through a manhood perspective. The investigation has revealed that the masculinity within the society creates the folklore patterns that prohibit the transfer of the secrets of this gender group to women and on the other hand, prohibit the connection of women with the male social environment.

The attitudes supporting manhood are not expressed directly in the folklore texts, but are articulated sporadically, yet their symbolic manifestations influence all the events in the text. In general, investigating the psychosocial complexes within folklore provides extensive opportunities for the study of creative facts in a projective context. In this article, the embodiment of manhood in folklore has been analyzed based on Azerbaijani fairy-tales, jokes and proverbs. The results of the research reveal that sharing a secret to a woman is constructed as deprivation of manhood in the socio-cultural environment of Azerbaijan.

In this article, the concept of the men's keeping secrets from the women has also been investigated within the framework of the Azerbaijani-language virtual social environment. The examples from the Internet sources considering Azerbaijani folklore, which have recently become the cultural reality, have been selected and analyzed in order to explain manhood stereotypes. The results of the investigation show that unlike the traditional folklore facts, the concept of the men's keeping secrets from the women in the virtual social environment is presented in a more ironic and comic manner. The urgency to examine manhood stereotypes in the context of humor and irony is explained through introducing the alternatives to the tradition and free attitude to the stereotypes of Internet folklore.

**Keywords:** manhood, to keep secrets from women, virtual-social environment, Internet folklore

## Introduction

The carried out investigation shows that stereotypes and folklore are mutually connected (Abrahams 1970, 238; Dundes 1977, 144; Toll 1971, 47). It suggests that the stereotypes create folklore and vice versa, that the folklore itself perpetuates certain stereotypes. Such interconnection makes it necessary to investigate the relationship between stereotypes and folklore, examining them mutually. Otherwise, we shall not be able to understand fully the creative socio-psychological relations of meanings within folklore and the reasons why these stereotypes remain present in everyday life over a long time.

One of the stereotypes that exists in the society and has a profound influence on people's activities is the gender-related stereotype. In Azerbaijan society, there are specific stereotypes regarding women's perception of men, and conversely, the men's numerous specific stereotypes about women. Such stereotypes can distinctly influence the activities and behaviors in the social life. For example, men's stereotypes about women in many cases prevent them from being subjected to discrimination, limited choices in diverse professions and establishing their participation in many areas of social life freely. As in all patriarchal environments, the folklore environment in Azerbaijan is the best source to understand the discrimination of women by the male collective. Thus, in many cases there are certain stereotypes among the members of the community that are not clearly expressed (Dundes 1976, 1525). With the investigation of the symbolic essence of folklore, it is possible to identify the ideological concepts, in the first place stereotypes that influence the relations in the society actively.

In 1918 the first democratic country of the East was established in Azerbaijan and women were given the exclusive civil rights, such as to vote in this state (Huseynova 2018, 52). Today there is no difference among men and women in Azerbaijan about the legal issues. In many areas, the women work along the men and lead the great organizations.

In addition, the relationship between women and men in the certain household life and domestic behaviors is more based on the stereotypes. In many cases, it leads to the emergence of the certain limitations in women's self-expression in the social life (Huseynova, Eliyev 2018, 66). There is a serious need to study the individual stereotypes in order to understand the socio-psychological essence of the chauvinist approaches of male groups to women. In order to understand the essence of the problem better, we would like to mention Alan Dundes's following idea: „The question is: What should be done if the attitude and values which are being communicated and continued are adjudged faulty? It is my hope that the present investigation will assist those who seek to eliminate the male bias, which pervades so much of American society. However, I do not believe that trying to censor or ban the folklore materials cited above would do

much good – even if it were possible to bring censorship to bear upon folklore. It is well to remember that folklore reflects a society. A racist society, for example, is bound to have examples of racist folklore. Merely sweeping the racist attitudes which produced the folklore in the first place: „...it is the society and its attitudes which must be altered, not just the folklore. One must treat the cause of disease, not just the symptoms. On the other hand, to the extent that folklore helps perpetuate racism, prejudice, male chauvinism, stereotypes, etc., we, as professional folklorists must point this out at every opportunity. By making the unconscious or unselfconscious conscious, we may raise levels of consciousness. We cannot stop folklore, but we can hold it up to the light of reason and through the unrivaled picture it provides, we may better see what wrongs need righting” (Dundes 1980, 175).

As it is seen from this approach, one of the main ways to identify and eliminate stereotypes that cause the various negative attitudes is their investigation. The investigation of the stereotyped relationships repeated unconsciously in everyday life creates the conditions for their purification by bringing them to the sphere of consciousness. Understanding the illogicality in their essence can create great opportunities for their elimination or transformation.

### The Embodiment of the Ideology of Superiority of the Men from the Women in Folklore

It is difficult to understand the essence of the stereotypes of male collectives about women by the simple observation of the ethnographic reality and social behaviors. It is of great importance to address the folklore facts to comprehend it. The stereotypes that influence the most different levels of social life reveal their essence in folklore more clearly.

In order to understand the essence of the stereotypes regarding men about women, we would like to look through the epic poem „Dede Gorgud” which is the medieval monument of the Azerbaijani people. The epos is a creative fact of the male collective and reflects their views about the world. In this sense, in order to express the stereotypes of the men about the women, the epos „Dede Gorgud” is of great importance. In the introductory part of the epos „Dede Gorgud” the women characters are divided into four groups. The only positively characterized group is „*evin dayagi*”. The women who belong to the first group „*evin dayagi*” in the epos and are considered as positive women who greet guests, feed and drink them, even if their husbands are not at home (Alizade 2004, 22). The second group „*solduran sop*” consists of women complaining against their husbands (Alizade 2004, 23). The third group „*dolduran top*” comprises the women who talk eagerly and casually about other people from morning ‘till

night (Alizade 2004, 23). The fourth group „*bayagi*” is about the women who do not obey and ignore their husbands in front of the guests.

The main criteria in this classification of women in „Dede Gorgud” poem is to show the women’s role within male interests. As it is seen, the women who act, participate in social communication, inspect their husband’s attitude to the household and family, are stubborn and rude, are viewed in a negative light. In the epos, which is the product of the male activity, these kinds of women are valued negatively and they are wished to be seen dead. On the contrary, the women who obey their husbands, do their household duties and respect their husband’s name are valued highly in the society.

From the aforementioned classification of the men’s perceptions about the women, it is obvious that the women gaining social status are not considered acceptable in the male environment, for women, that are active in the society are estimated by men as negative types. As the women becoming social are perceived by the men as a chaotic behavior that can lead to the collapse of the household and the family, as a symbolic representation of the social cosmos.

The patriarchal approach about the superiority of the men above the women does not show itself only in social behaviors. The fact that men have a higher presence is also embodied in the folklore at the more different levels. We would like to explain our thoughts on the basis on several folklore texts in Azerbaijani Turks.

The people who do not follow the Islam customs and traditions in Azerbaijan address to God as „The man who owns the Earth and the Sky”. Claiming that God, as the highest and most powerful of all creatures that belongs to the male sex, must also be understood as the symbolic expression of the superiority of this group in the society. The creature texts about the creation of a woman from a man’s rib, characteristic for the Indo-European culture, are also spread widely in Azerbaijan culture (Ajaloglu 2005, 27; Suleymanova 2013, 15). The fact that in the process of creation, a man was created before a woman and that a woman was created from a man’s rib, is a text formed by the male collective and this fact serves to show that men are more superior beings than women.

In the text, which is kept in the 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscript and is about the emergence of the first man and woman, also describes that one day at the very beginning of the world there was a heavy flood. The flood brought the mud to the cave on the Gara Dag (Black Mountain). At that time, the Sun was at its highest point. In the cave on the Gara Dag (Black Mountain) the heat, the wind, the water and the land combined in a human form. „The father of Turks Ulu Ay Ata appeared in this form nine months after the creation of the world” (Demir 2017, 86). Again, in that source it is described that forty years after the creation of Ulu Ay Ata floods appeared again on the top of the Gara Dag (Black Mountain). That flood filled the cave with mud. At that time, the Sun was not in its highest point. „That is why Ulu Ay Ana was not very strong. In comparison with

Ulu Ay Ata Ay Ana was not so strong as he was. In addition, Ulu Ay Ana was not formed as perfectly as Ulu Ay Ata” (Demir 2017, 88).

In this text, the discrimination between a man and a woman is seen clearly. Here it is described as if the man was created on the basis of the Sun’s heat much earlier and stronger than a woman. And, it causes the woman to be created on the basis of less heat than the man and as such emerges as a non-perfect being. The text created from the position of men serves to justify the stereotypes of the society and to emphasize the fact that men are supreme and women are imperfect beings.

It should be kept in mind that the superiority of the man against the woman does not show itself only at the level of the folkloric motif. This approach displays many spheres of social life and, in many cases, attracts the attention of calls for violence and aggression against the women. We would like to focus the attention on a few examples in this direction: „Husband is the crown of the wife”, „Husband’s stick is the branch of the flower, if I have a fault, beat me!”, „Even God can’t built the house knocked down by the woman”, „The wife’s dream can be false”, „The woman’s reprimand can be accepted by other woman”, „The woman makes shoes for the devil”, „The woman has no gullet”, „Who has a long hair, she has no brains” (Heggi 2005, 17), „The woman’s one rib is less” (Heggi 2005, 22) and „Forty women has no brain as a black hen” (Heggi 2005, 23), „The way constructed by a wife will last till the ravine” (Garaja 2016, 12). The myths of creating the superiority of men above the women are presented in the context of the divine laws. While there is no direct observation of any abusive attitude towards the women in such texts, the attitude towards women is clearly observed in the proverbs presented above from the position of men. Such proverbs play a serious role in the formation and transmission of the ideological basis of violence against the women by men in the social environment.

Some concepts of Islamic religion also play a serious role in ensuring that the men are more superior than women in society. Since our main problem is to study the mutual relationship among the folklore facts and social stereotypes, we do not want to mention the relevant religious concepts.

### The Ability of Keeping the Secret in the Male Collective as a Condition of the Masculinity

Keeping a secret in the social reality of Azerbaijan is considered one of the main conditions of masculinity. In the society, both serious and respectable, men are characterized as the people who keep secrets. The concept of masculinity in the Azerbaijani mentality is a stereotype that regulates the activities of men in their daily life, their language, behavior, spirituality, or in short, their activities

in all areas of life. This stereotype imposes special conditions on boys and, at the same time, manifests itself as their superiority in certain fields of activity (Guliyev 2022, 69-76; Veliyev 2007, 118-137). Such a social approach has also been expressed in folklore in a peculiar way. There are many sayings that serve to strengthen the secret concept among the men: „The man’s breast can be a cemetery”, „A head can be cut near the male, but he must be dumb”, „A man has a gullet” (according to the folk beliefs, as the women have no gullets, they can’t keep secrets. But, the men have gullets and they can keep secrets), etc. Such folklore facts serve to bring to the attention that keeping secrets is one of the main conditions of masculinity. If a man tells the secret to someone else, it can cause him to lose the respect in the society. In this case, the saying such as „He is a chatterbox, like a woman he can’t keep secrets” is used. The sensibility about the secret in the male collective has also left its own deep imprint in epic folklore. In the tale plot of „Isgandar” (AT 782), it is described that Isgandar had a horn on his head. That is why after each snip off his hair he killed the barber. One day again he needed a barber. As all barbers were killed by Isgandar, a shepherd-barber was brought to his palace. After snipping off his hair, Isgandar wanted to kill the shepherd. The shepherd entreated Isgandar not to kill him. Isgandar said to the shepherd: „If you keep this secret, I shall not kill you, but if you tell it to anyone, I shall kill you that day” (Seyidov 2005, 139). The shepherd could keep that secret only five weeks and did not tell anyone about it. But, that secret caused him to get ill and lose weight. The secret tortured the shepherd so much that he finally dug a hole in the forest and told the following words into the hole three times: „Isgandar has a horn” (Seyidov 2005, 140). Covering the hole with soil, the shepherd closed the hole. Then, later in the tale it is described that the reeds appeared in that place. The shepherd began to prepare pipes from those reeds. Playing the pipes only one sound was heard: „Isgandar has a horn on his head” (Seyidov 2005, 140). So, the secret quickly spread. Isgandar also heard the secret. The shepherd was brought to him and Isgandar learnt the truth. After that event Isgandar was named as „Isgandar Zulgerneyn” (Seyidov 2005, 140). The meaning of this folklore fact is that it is very difficult to keep the secret. In addition, the fact that the secret is known by someone else, can lead to its spread, for other people may hear about it. In this case, the murder of the one who knows the secret, as shown in the folklore example, is the main way to prevent its spread. Such attitude shows the sensitiveness of keeping secrets in the male collective. Along with many Eastern countries, in the tale „Gul and Sanavar”, which is one of the most common tales in the territory of Azerbaijan, Sanavar cut off the heads of all the people whom he spoke his secret to. Thus, there was a gazelle and a dog with a gold chain in Sanavar’s house. Sanavar gave the leavings of the dog to the gazelle every day, but the gazelle did not eat it. Then Sanavar took a head of the black slave and whipped him, observing it

the gazelle agreed to eat the leavings of the dog crying. Sanavar agreed to tell the secret of that event to the people only after realizing that the secret would kill them. It became clear that the gazelle was Sanavar's former wife. One day Sanavar saw his wife together with the black slave in his own house in close relation. Sanavar became very angry and wanted to kill the black slave. But, his wife helped the black slave and the dog helped Sanavar. At last, winning the event Sanavar read magic and his wife became a gazelle. From that day, Sanavar made the gazelle eat the dog's leavings (Zeynalli 2005, 146). In this tale, the murder of a man who knows the secret should be understood as an indicator of the sensitivity of the male collective to the secret in the social reality. It means that it is very important to keep a secret in the male collective that even the person who is given a secret is killed in order to prevent its spreading.

### In the Stereotypes of Men, the Women as a Gender Group Who Cannot Keep Secrets

One of the wide spread stereotypes among the men is about not telling the secrets to their wives. In the male environment, it is thought that giving away any secret to a woman can lead to the spread of the secret and may result in difficult situations between a husband and his wife. Through the analysis of the folklore tales, as imaginative works, it is possible to analyze the influence of these stereotypes on certain behaviors more clearly. From this point of view, the analysis of the stereotypes taught to boys in Azerbaijan society consciously and unintentionally, had a serious impact on their behavior in society and families in the following years, which proved the folklore materials of great importance.

Keeping secrets from the women in the Azerbaijani society is one of the concepts of the manhood. The need of men to keep secrets from women emerges from the stereotypes considering the women. For, the women are considered as „gossip-spreading”, „word-wandering” and „rumor-spreading” in the society. This notion has also left its own deep imprint in folklore. It is no coincidence that in tales and legends the gossipers and the people telling the various secrets are represented mainly by the negative female characters. In the context of this approach, it is considered necessary not to give the secrets to the women in the male environment. In general, there is a saying among the people that „A man must not tell everything at home he saw outside”. It is no coincidence that in the tales and legends there are many facts about the men who told everything to their wives and consequently they had many unpleasant events. One of the folklore facts that we have collected is the one of the worldly-wise man who gives such advice to a merchant, not to tell everything he saw outside to his wife. One day during the travel, the merchant sees the man adoring his ass as if it were his

a wife. When the merchant returns home, his wife asks him about his day. The merchant begins to tell the event about the man and the ass. The wife gets interested in it and asks her husband to take her with him on a journey. When they reach the town, the woman pretends to be ill and they stay at that man's place as guests. As a result, that man marries the merchant's wife and runs away with the merchant's riches (Rustamzadeh 2006, 124). The result of the content of this tale is that the events that are considered offensive in the male environment happened to the man for the fact that he gives the secret to his wife, violating the norms of behavior that are characteristic for men. Such folklore examples, in turn, serve to further strengthen the stereotypes about the man not giving a secret to his wife.

The facts about spreading the man's secret by the women and putting them in bad situations before the enemies are also met in the epos „The Book of Dede Gorgud“. In the epos „The Book of Dede Gorgud“ in the part „The story of Bekil's son Emran“ one day Bekil fell down from the horse and his leg was broken. Seeing his father's situation Bekil's son took him to the bed. „During five days Bekil did not go to his throne. He did not tell anyone about his broken leg. But, one night his leg hurt him very much so he began to moan with pain. His wife said: „My hero husband, what happened to you? When the enemy attacked, you didn't fear. When the sharp arrow shot your horse, you didn't bend. Why don't you tell your grief to me? I am your wife“. Bekil answered: „My dear, I fell down from the horse and broke my leg“. His wife began to cry and informed the servant. The servant told the news to the doorkeeper. The news was spread among the people: „Bekil has fallen down from the horse and broken his leg...“. They say that the infidel had a spy among the people. The spy hearing that news informed the infidel“ (Alizade 2004, 278). Then the attack of the enemy to Bekil's country is described.

From this text it is also seen that giving a secret to a woman by a man caused him difficulties. It is known from the information in the text that Bekil does not hide breaking his leg from his son, but he does not want to tell his wife about it. But, his wife speaking kindly to Bekil tries to learn the secret. Being tempted through the kind talk with his wife, Bekil could not keep his secret and told it to his wife. As a result, based on the communication between the women (from the text it is seen that Bekil's wife knowing the secret tells it to her slave) and the man, the secret about Bekil's broken leg reaches the enemy and causes difficult situation for Bekil.

In the epos created from the male position, the presentation of a woman as a being that causes the disclosure of the male secret should be understood as the embodiment of the stereotypes of male groups about the women. As it is seen from the plot, a man who is being tempted from the kind talk with his wife told her the secret and found himself in a difficult situation. There is a saying among



the folk: „Who laughs at wife, he will laugh only once in his life” (Azarlu 1994, 17). Here the expression „to laugh at” means „to speak kindly”. It means that the man who speaks to his wife is punished that much that this laugh can be his last laugh. That person will have to spend the rest of his life in grief for his pleasant conversation with his wife. This expression itself shares the same spirit with the above event, which we presented from the epos „The Book of Dede Gorgud”. In this epos the husband’s pleasant talk with his wife puts him into a difficult situation.

In the folklore, facts created from the men’s perspective are created as such that the women are eager to learn the secret of their husbands. The folklore male characters tend to tell their secrets to women. For example, in one of the tales it is described that a brave hero wants to save the kidnapped girl from the ogre. In order to accomplish his task, it is necessary to find out the location of the ogre’s soul. The hero that goes to the underground world demands the kidnapped girl to find out the location of the ogre’s soul. The girl asks the ogre about the place of its soul and the ogre shows the broom. The girl begins to decorate the broom and respects it. Then the ogre says that its soul is in the fire. The girl takes the clothes, puts them into the fire and shows her respect to it. Seeing it, the ogre tells the truth to the girl: „My soul is neither in the broom nor in the fire. My soul is in the body of the dove in the cage of the grey ox in the Boz Mountain. I can’t reach it, either” (Rustamzade 2012b, 181). The ogre was deceived by the cunning woman to tell her the place of its soul, which resulted in the death of the ogre. Even if the ogre is a negative hero, this example shows that if a man tells his secrets to a woman, it causes his tragedy and death. This fact itself points clearly that the male stereotypes about the women are presented at the most different levels and forms in folklore.

The moments when women reveal the secrets of the men do not show themselves only in the relationship between the husband and the wife. Sometimes the sisters cause the disclosure of the secrets of their brothers and the daughters do the same to their fathers. This fact itself should be understood as the men’s stereotypes regarding women. As an example of these facts, we would like to look through the legend „Maiden Tower”. In the legend, it is described that the Iranian king loves the sister of six brothers. In order not to marry their sister to the king, they built a tower on the top of the high mountain so that the king could not enter it. At last, the girl sent an old woman to the king that told him the strategy approach. The girl explained the secret of the tower. „Give the salt to an ass, but don’t give water to it. The thirsty ass will find the water place of the tower. If the water runs out, then the brothers will be defeated”. The king did everything said and married the girl. Later the king asked the girl about her family. The girl answered that she was an only child. The king did not like the girl’s behavior and presumed that in the future she would do the same thing to him. As she told the

secret of her family, the king ordered to tie the girl to the tail of the donkey and be dragged (Nabioglu, Kazimoglu, Asgar 2005, 55). In this text, the girl reveals the secret of her brothers to the enemy and causes their defeat. In this episode, the sensitivity of the men to the issue of a secret is felt clearly, for the king kills the girl for revealing the secret of her family – her father and brothers. This text was also created from the position of the men. Therefore, despite the victory of the king, he considers the woman's disclosure of another man's secret as a bad behavior. Not forgiving the betrayal of his enemy and imposing a death sentence on the girl who engaged in such behavior holds significant importance in highlighting the value attributed to the concept of secrecy in the context of manhood.

The approach based on different motifs mentioned above about „the men's keeping secrets from the women” shows itself clearly. Occasionally, the necessity of not telling the secrets to the women by men is mentioned at the ethical, didactic level. One of such folklore texts is widely spread legend about „Bahlul Dananda”. Bahlul Dananda, known as a wise man in the East, including Azerbaijan, is also known as a valuable „word-selling” image.

The precious words he expresses consist of ideological ideas and approaches highly esteemed by society, ultimately finding affirmation. In one of the famous texts, that has many variations, it is described that one day Allahverdi Khan, the vizier of Shah Abbas, sees Bahlul sitting in front of three piles of sand. He asks Bahlul about his work. Bahlul answers that he sells the word. Vizier Allahverdi shows the first sand pile and asks Bahlul about its meaning. Destroying the first sand pile Bahlul answers: „Who trusts to the king, he is not wise”. Allahverdi vizier asks the meanings of the second and the third piles. The second sand pile is „If the husband tells his secret to his wife, he is not wise. The man must not tell his secret to the woman”. The third sand pile sold by Bahlul Dananda is „Who doesn't rely on his own relatives, he is not wise” (Rustamzade 2012a, 338). At the next stage of the plot, it is seen that Allahverdi Khan wants to check the reality of the words told by Bahlul. That is why, vizier Allahverdi Khan steals Shah Abbas's ram in order to check the advice of Bahlul. He gives the ram to one of his close relatives, then he returns home, takes a ram from his yard and cuts it. Then he tells his wife that „this is Shah Abbas's ram, I have stolen it, don't tell anyone about it”. The wife promises that she will not tell this secret. But, when Shah Abbas looks for his ram, he cannot find it. Vizier Allahverdi comes to his house and wants to check the faithfulness of his wife. He begins to beat his wife and suddenly his wife cries: „You have stolen the king's ram and have cut it to pieces. Why are you beating me?” The neighbor hears her words and the news quickly spread through the village (Rustamzade 2012a, 339). The king wants to kill the vizier. Hearing this news, everyone begins to laugh except vizier's relatives (Rustamzade 2012a, 340). At last the vizier Allahverdi Khan returns the king's ram back and comes to the conclusion that the words told by Bahlul are true.

In the text above, the advice given by Bahlul contains the values of Azerbaijani society in itself. The idea of keeping the secret from a woman is tested and confirmed to be true by vizier Allahverdi Khan. As it is seen from the text, vizier Allahverdi beats his wife in order to check her ability to keep secrets. As a result, it turns out that women do not have the ability of keeping secrets. Analyzing this plot in the context of men's socio-psychological complexes regarding secrecy reveals an interesting perspective. The story suggests that telling a secret among men is not acceptable, but in the text it is shown that when a woman reveals a man's secret she is faced with abrupt behavior. Seeing the abrupt manners from the man, she tells his secret. In fact, it is also noted that the men are considered superior to women in terms of their attitude to the secrecy. In the metaphorical reality of the text, it becomes clear that the communication between Bahlul Dananda and vizier Allahverdi shows the significance of keeping secrets as a fundamental condition of manhood.

### The Symbolic Embodiment of the Secret Concept among the Men: On the Base of the Tale „Ovchu Pirim” („Hunter Pirim”) (AT 670)

The stereotypes about keeping secrets from the women in the male environment are sometimes symbolically expressed in folklore materials. In this case, the symbolic language of the text should be analyzed to understand how stereotypes are implicated in shaping the meaning. That is why, we would like to analyze the „Hunter Pirim” tale which is usually spoken by the male story tellers. This tale describes that, one day Hunter Pirim saw a white and a black snake hugging. The Hunter Pirim feels sorry for the white snake and is jealous of the black snake; when trying to kill the latter with an arrow, he wounds the white snake by mistake. The white snake is a daughter of the snakes' king. The king invites Hunter Pirim to his place. On the way, Hunter Pirim describes the scene he has seen to the snake that takes him to their king. This snake says to Hunter Pirim that „if the snakes' king is aware of the fact he has affected your honor, he will pardon you immediately” (Seyidov 2005, 6).

Subsequently, when he told the snakes' king about the event, the king showed a sense of honor and decided to award him. At the Hunter Pirim's request, the snakes' king gives him a ring providing him with a skill to understand the language of all animals and to have all the things he wanted. One day, when the Hunter Pirim overhears the conversations among horses, he bursts into laughter. When his wife saw him laughing, she asked, „Why did you laugh?”. At this moment, Hunter Pirim, who understands the language of a cock, seeks advice

on how to compel his wife to return. In reply to this question, the cock suggests to bear with his wife when he is at home and then tell her to leave. Therefore, Hunter Pirim beats his wife and forces her out of the house. In the end, the wife promises that she will not question him. However, when the wife returns to the house, she presses him to disclose the secret behind his laughter. On her insistence, Hunter Pirim discloses the secret, and despite escaping the sudden death, he is later chased by the wolves that eat him (Seyidov 2005, 8-15). We have to pay attention to another tale to grasp the psycho-semantics of the laughter. In this version, when Hunter Pirim wants the snakes' king to spit on his mouth so that he knows his secret, the king says: „You will not be able to keep it.” Hunter Pirim assures: „I will.” The king repeats three times, but he is not satisfied here-with. In the end, the king spits on his mouth. When he leaves the house, he sees that he understands the language of locusts, birds and ants (Rustamzadeh 2006, 240). In this version, Hunter Pirim knows he will die if he discloses the secret to his wife and asks her to call the Mullah before he discloses the secret. When the wife goes to call mullah, Pirim encounters an event: A cock runs after a hen. It is not able to reach it and catches another hen. Even if it is shameful, it climbs on it, blows its wings and crows, „My name is not Hunter Pirim. Which hen I will climb on makes no difference to me.” After these words of the cock, Hunter Pirim divorces his wife (Rustamzadeh 2006, 241).

Certainly, the reader will have the right to ask us immediately why we have described the story to explain the simple fact of „laughter.” The reason is to shed light on the fact how laughter is related to the various psycho-social relations within the community, as expressed in the actual thoughts and ideas presented here. We think that providing an overview of the matter in the context of a plot is crucial for understanding this matter.

If you read carefully, Hunter Pirim is presented as a person with sensitivity to the issues of honor. The incident that infuriates him, when the honor of the white snake was affected, is when he tries to kill the male snake. Despite wounding the white snake by mistake, the father of the white snake, who is the snakes' king, decides to reward him. As is seen from the tale, the main reason for rewarding Hunter Pirim is related to his imaginative defense of the snakes' king honor. The snakes' king emphasis on honor is related to the importance of honor in the male community.

Hence, in Azerbaijani society, women are associated with men's honor, and to avoid being a target in this community, men significantly control the behavior of women in their surroundings. This sensitive attitude towards the matter of honor influences the idea of the hero in the society. The sensitivity of Azerbaijani man towards the matter of honor caused transformation in the tale's hero. Although his daughter is wounded, the snakes' king decides to award Hunter Pirim due to his sense of honor. Indeed, this situation unveils another psycho-

logical complex in the masculine social environment. Observing carefully the matter of honor in the society proves itself in this case as the necessary condition to gain respect among the men. This psychological complex existing in the society calls forth the implementation of Hunter Pirim's wishes by the snakes' king. It is due to this case, regarding the matter of honor, that both Hunter Pirim and the snakes' king share the sensitiveness of the same psychological and social environment. By the influence of the society's psycho-social complex related to the encouragement of sensitive attitude toward the matter of honor, the snakes' king spits on the mouth of Hunter Pirim, which enables him to understand all secrets of nature.

As it is seen from the tale, before spitting on the mouth of Hunter Pirim, the snakes' king hesitates to provide him with all secrets of nature. In reality, this hesitation is a metaphor of the psychological anxiety to keep secret in the masculine environment. Although the snakes' king has repeatedly told him that he will not be able to keep the secret, Hunter Pirim persists in this matter. In this case, „spitting” is a symbol of keeping a secret. Thus, the symbolic equivalence between the words „secret” and „spit” within the society refers to other facts of significance. For example, it is acknowledged that different people express their idea about any problem in the same way, and in this case, the idiom „spitting into the mouth” is used. The expression signifies sharing the same secret or having the same ideas about a particular issue. Besides, there is an expression „a man will not retract his words,” which means that a man always fulfills his promise in the community and incites other men to fulfill their promises as well. In this case, the action of spitting appears as a metaphor of verbal expression.

In this sense, in the tale of Hunter Pirim, the semantics of the snakes' king telling him a secret by spitting into his mouth is found more clearly. It means that the act of spitting, through which Hunter Pirim is let into the secret of nature by the snakes' king, has the same semantics as a spoken word. While transferring this mystery, the anxiety associated with keeping a secret arises and reflects the psycho-social unease of the masculine environment. It is no coincidence that the person who is not able to keep a secret is described by using an insulting expression „henpecked”.

It should be noted that another aspect of the socio-psychological complex of men has been expressed in this tale: Hunter Pirim is faced with a risk to disclose the secret, namely, in the process of communication with his wife. The wife uses many methods to know her husband's secret. At this moment, the men letting their wives into their secret is illustrated through the episode of „hen and cock.” As seen from the above-mentioned tale, the rooster, displaying a dismissive attitude towards the hen, asserts its phallic power over another chicken. As its leg-over relation with a hen is finished, the rooster expresses the mockery of the masculine collectivity saying that „I am not Hunter Pirim for you.” The expres-

sion of mockery and irony of the masculine collectivity against Hunter Pirim in the context of demonstrating the phallic dominance of the rooster over the hen has originated in the traditional culture from the perception of deprivation of masculinity in cases when men let women into their secrets from the standpoint of socio-cultural conditions. Put differently, „keeping secret” is perceived in the culture as one of the basic metaphors of the masculinity in the community, as possessing the phallic power, being able to protect his honor and so on. In the cultural environment, which is based on the opinion of the men’s collectivity, the fact that women cannot keep secrets is associated even with their biological deficiency. Among the people, there is a saying that „a woman cannot keep secret that she has no gullet.” From the opinion of the masculine collectivity, it is understood that because women have no gullet, their inability to keep a secret is strictly related to this fact. In fact, in this type of folklore texts, the masculine collectivity submits their „obligations” to the society (Tiger 1984, 130).

Challenges posed by men in the community, resisting the inclusion of women into their mysteries is not an approach reflected only in the folklore texts. Even the social life contains challenges of this type that play an important role in shaping the relationships between men. In the tale presented above, the „cock”, demonstrating the collective masculine sentiment, prompts Hunter Pirim to behave to his wife the way he does for intends to solve his mystery. He advises the hunter to beat his wife and divorce her. There is an imperative told to the women interfering in men’s affairs: „Don’t meddle in my affairs!” The severe reaction toward a woman intending to find out more about her husband’s affairs results in being beaten in this tale. Despite the fact that Hunter Pirim divorces his wife, not letting her into his mystery, in some versions of this tale the hunter could not stand the woman’s pressures and discloses the secret, even though he was aware of the punishment of death against this act. After revealing a secret, the reason of the punishment imposed on the hunter is not related to the fact that he did not keep the promise regarding the cult of a snake; it is the punishment imposed on a person, i.e., the hunter revealing secrets of the masculine collectivity. Therefore, in the Azerbaijani society, the masculine collectivity does its best to protect its secrets from women, and in real life, the persons letting women into their mystery are called „milksop.” It should be noted that this negative approach may reach even the death penalty in the tales’ fantastic reality.

### The Ironic Embodiment of Manhood Stereotypes in the Azerbaijani-language Virtual Social Environment

If the virtual social networks, on the one hand, are the continuation of the real social environment, on the other hand, they serve as a new technological

environment that offers the self-expression opportunities to an individual. (Price 2016, 41). In such circumstances, the stereotypes of the real social environment not only propagate within the context of the technological capabilities of the virtual environment, but are also challenged by the alternative approaches. In this regard, the examination of the male stereotypes on the basis of folklore facts revealed in the virtual social networks can create the conditions for the emergence of an interesting picture.

The Azerbaijani-language virtual space is an integral part of the Azerbaijani socio-cultural environment. On the one hand, this platform includes real world, and on the other, it shows the relationships, values and concepts of the virtual socio-cultural environment. Here, the seriousness of the real socio-cultural environment and the liberality of the virtual environment are evident. As for the Internet environment, predominantly social networks, it mainly consists of young people and middle-aged generations, whose attitudes are formed on the socio-cultural processes and who have a leading position<sup>1</sup>. As a result, unlike the traditional, real social environment, the stereotypes concerning the interests of male groups in the virtual social environment are not advocated in the same manner. Within the opportunities created by the virtual-communicative environment, the manhood stereotypes become the subject of discussion and irony. We would like to look through the concrete examples of the stereotypes of men about the women in Azerbaijan society in the virtual environment. Let us pay attention to the following examples of virtual folklore, which arose on the basis of the negative stereotypes of men about the women:



URL – 1

(„-Is Google a girl or a boy? Of course, Google is a girl. Because it doesn't give opportunity to end the sentences and begins to answer not thinking ☺")

In the real socio-cultural environment, the women are characterized by the men as a gender group „not depending on the reality speech but gossip about what they know”. In the example mentioned above, Google is shown as the female gender. But, the issue arises because, during any search Google also presents irrelevant topics. Google’s feature, reflecting male perspective on inappropriate discourse by women, is presented within the feminine gender.

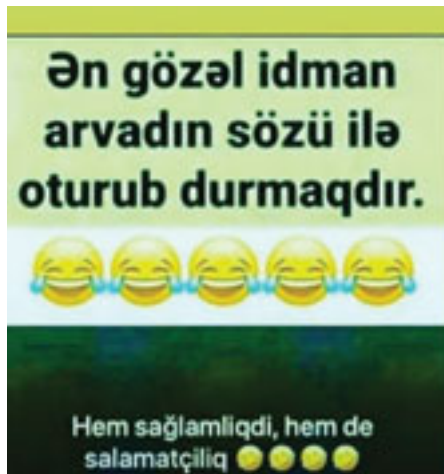
The male stereotypes about the women’s peevishness have contributed to the emergence of the specific patterns in the context of humor within the virtual environment. The following example is also another manifestation of this stereotype:



URL – 2

(700-year-old skeleton of husband and wife. The woman is still talking)

Or one of the most popular phrases in the Azerbaijani-language virtual social network is the following:



URL – 3

(„The best sport for the men is „to sit and stand” by the word of the wife”)



One of the most important stereotypes among the men in the traditional social environment of Azerbaijan is not to listen to women's words and not to pay attention to their advice when making a decision. In the real social environment, the approach methods of the men are shown as the following: „Let the man be disgraced, if he listens to the woman's advice”, „Let the husband be dead, if he agrees with his wife”. If this approach carries out the serious propagation of the manhood stereotypes in the folklore examples of the traditional social environment, then in the virtual folklore facts that stereotype is subjected to the sharp irony. In other words, if in the traditional social environment, the relevant negative stereotypes of the men about the women are propagated and supported by folklore examples, such a discriminative attitude towards the woman is ironically demonstrated in the virtual environment as well. It seems to us that if one of the reasons is connected with the technological conditions created by the Internet to avoid social control, on the other hand, it is the organization of this environment from young people who have a free and liberal attitude to the customs and habits, sacral values and concepts.

The concept of „secret”, which exists in the real socio-cultural environment of Azerbaijan in male-female relations, also manifests itself in the virtual social environment. Some of the folklore facts arising from the position of men in the Azerbaijani-language virtual social networks are connected with the confidential information kept by the men from the women.

As we noted earlier in our article, the prohibition on the disclosure of secrets among the men and the criminal motif given as a result of violation of this prohibition are widely observed in the traditional folklore facts. In different variants of the tale „Hunter Pirim”, which we analyzed at the beginning of the article, being punished with death of Hunter Pirim as a result of the telling the another man's secret is the embodiment of the male position. However, the attitude to the „secret” in Azerbaijani folklore samples noted from the traditional and real social environment is the same as ideological approaches in the Azerbaijani-language virtual social environment, the embodiment of this concept in folkloric facts created by the new generation has a specific character.

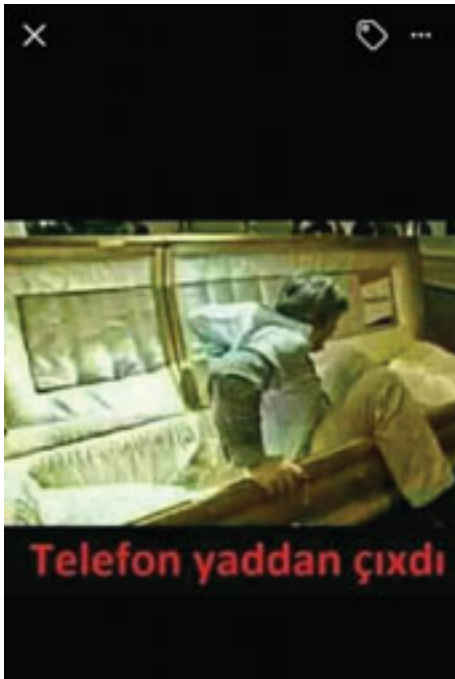
The information and behaviors considered „secret” in the traditional folklore include concepts that play an important role in the supporting of the „idioculture” (Fine 1979, 733-745) of that group. In the virtual social environment, the intimate information belonging to an individual, as well as the concepts and ideas belonging to the various social groups determine the „secret” of the Internet environment.

The traditional concepts and approaches about the groups of man keeping secrets from the women reveal themselves in the virtual environment as the separate individuals keeping their information secretly from the women. Let's pay attention to the suitable text: „One day a man falls ill and says: „Dear, call the

first aid, I am dying”. The woman answers: „Tell the code of your telephone”. The man understands that if he tells the code of the telephone, his wife will become aware of everything. The man answers: „I don’t need the first aid, the death is the truth”.

In this text it is described in the humorous manner that, despite the fact that the husband is dying, he does not want his wife to use his phone. The main meaning expressed in the text on the metaphor of the truth of death is that the secret is not given to the wife in any case – even at the cost of death. In the above text, the death with the secret shows itself as the cause-effect relationship, which is identical to the complexes of the social reality.

Or,

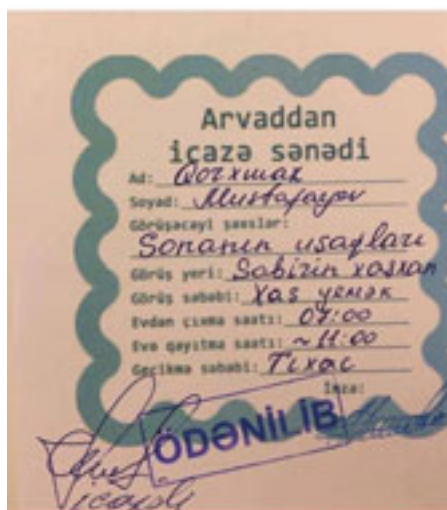


URL – 4  
(„I forgot the phone”)

In the given example, the situation of the resurrection of a man who has forgotten his phone and does not take it with him is described. This example is important in terms of analyzing the complexities of the male collective to keep secrets from the women. As it is seen, the sensitivity to the personal / individual data is expressed on the basis of the resurrection motif.

The negative stereotypes of the men about the women in the socio-cultural environment of Azerbaijan at the same time are also shown in the condemnations and reprimands among the men. Thus, in the male collective establishing intimate relations with some women is considered as „a proud” sign. Such male propaganda manifests itself clearly in the irony of „men who are afraid of wives”. So, one of the models of pressure on a woman in the male environment is

reflected in the label „men who are afraid of their wives”. An example of mem as a „permission card from the wife” in Azerbaijani-language virtual social networks is the fact that it is expressed from the position of men and reflects pressure on women:



URL –5

(„Permission document from the wife”)

In this example the group of „men who are afraid of wife”, which is seized by the male environment, is a group of „men” who are indirectly subordinated to their wives, and do not follow the manhood stereotypes. In the „Permission document from the wife” some points such as the place of the meeting, reason, time, date, etc. have been written in details. This „document”, which seems to be the pressure of the women on the men at first glance, has been created on the basis of the male position. To tell the truth, the projective inversion event is observed here. The pressure of men on the women has emerged as the pressure of the women on the men. Undoubtedly, the target of this irony is the women who want to put pressure on the men. The situations in which the men express the attitude with the reproach and reproof among themselves are also included in this fact.

One of the folklore models of sensitivity to the personal data and secrets in the virtual social networks is characterizing the girls from the position of boys. In the following example given with the soft irony the sensitivity of girls to the personal data has become a subject of laughter based on an ironic attitude:



URL-6

(„The way to the „Gallery” of the girls”)

In the above example, it is described that the numerous codes, locks and padlocks are placed on the door of the way to the gallery of the girls. Here the sensitivity level of the women to their own data is expressed by the numerous locks and padlocks on the basis of the male position. In this example created from the position of the men the irony (according to the men’s thought the women cannot keep secrets) is reflected in the fact that the girls keep secrets by exaggerating the number of locks. Here the sensitivity of the girls protecting their virginity is also expressed on the base of the male position. In this sense, the lock on the door of the „gallery of girls” also symbolizes the protection of virginity. The analyses show that the stereotypes, which gain a more ironical prominence in the real social environment, emerge because of the weakening influence they have in the tradition context. For, these stereotypes, living under the control of tradition in the social reality, lose their urgency in the virtual world where the power of tradition influence decreases. But, it also leads to the transformation of some stereotypes inherent in the traditional social environment into an object of irony and laughter in the context of virtual social conditions. At the same time, the alternative views to such stereotypes appear in the virtual environment that change the traditional attitude by transferring to the real social environment.

Simon J. Bronner notes that the virtual social environment is in the interest of the younger generation, who wants to avoid more traditions. Comparing this attitude with the rituals in the traditional social environment, he explains the connection between the Internet and youth as their „leaving home”, „gaining physical mobility” and „the cultural transition to adolescence” (Bronner 2009,

31). In this sense, the ironic attitude to the traditional stereotypes in the Azerbaijani-language virtual environment has emerged from the idioculture of adolescents who have more mastered the technological knowledge and want to avoid the censorship of the tradition.

## Conclusion

In contemporary Azerbaijani society the male position is still of the great importance. In this regard, most of the culture values in the society personify the interests of the male collective. Affirming the superiority of the men in many spheres of the social life, this position is expressed in folklore both directly and symbolically. If in the myths of creation the superiority of men from the women are brought to the attention as the norm created by God, in folklore examples such as the proverbs and beliefs which are often practiced in everyday life, this advantage manifests itself in the form of an offensive and ironic attitude towards the women.

Through the results of the analysis, it is known that the ability of keeping secrets in the male collective is highly valued and is considered one of the main conditions of manhood. In Azerbaijani society according to the men's approach, the women are deprived of the ability of keeping secrets. But it shows the approach to the women as a non-perfect group. The stereotypes of the male collective about not giving the secrets to the women are caused by the desire to put them out of the male affairs. Thus, today the women who want to interfere in the various affairs of the men are treated with the expression „do not interfere in the men's affairs” as in a joke. Keeping this gender group in the information blockade the stereotype of „keeping the women away from the secrets” serves to confirm the superior positions of the men. If the stereotypes about the men keeping secrets from the women are brought to the attention in the form of judgments in proverbs and beliefs, in epic folklore examples this approach is based on the different conflicts between the man and the woman.

The stereotypes of the men keeping secrets from the women are also reflected in the new emerging Internet folklore in the specific form. The Internet environment, mainly formed from teenagers and young people, determines the ideological trends on the basis of the socio-psychological dynamics of that social group.

The analysis shows that in the Azerbaijani-language virtual social environment the negative stereotypes of the men about the women are accompanied by laughter and irony, unlike the tradition. In a virtual social environment, the ironic attitude to the manhood stereotypes, especially the concept of „secret” are associated with the liberal and democratic nature of social networks. It is no coinci-

dence that some stereotypes about personality that are supported and promoted in the traditional cultural environment, are subjected to the ironic interpretation by teenagers and young people in the Internet environment. The concept about the men's keeping secrets from the women shows itself also distinctly in the sensitivity of personal or individual information in Internet folklore. The analyses of folkloric facts about the information that the men keep secrets from the women and the husbands keep their confidential information from the wives in the virtual social networks show that the men are very sensitive to the secret and the confidential information, and even they agree to death for their protection. But unlike the traditional folklore, the men's keeping secrets from the women in Internet folklore is accompanied by laughter and ironic attitude. At the same time, the ability of the Internet to escape the pressure of traditions and stereotypes led to the emergence of new virtual traditions.

In general, the analyses of folklore facts recorded either from the real, or the virtual social environment show that the stereotypes about the manhood, especially keeping secrets from the women play an important role in the formation of inter-sex relations in Azerbaijan society.

#### Note

See „The Digital 2023 Global Overview Report” published in January 2023 by the global agency „We Are Social” – <https://wearesocial.com/us/blog/2023/01/the-changing-world-of-digital-in-2023/>

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### Internet Resources

- URL – 1 <https://www.facebook.com/519736528047393/photos/rpp.519736528047393/1016940338327007/?type=3&theater> Sharing date: November 10, 2015; Date of access: April 11, 2023
- URL – 2 [https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=700%20illik%20%C9%99r-arvad%20skeleti&epa=SERP\\_TAB](https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=700%20illik%20%C9%99r-arvad%20skeleti&epa=SERP_TAB) Sharing date: July 26, 2018; Date of access: April 11, 2023
- URL – 3 <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=2646912275321524&set> Sharing date: August 9, 2019; Date of access: April 11, 2023
- URL – 4 <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2239683812815897&set=a.179230395527926&type=3&theater> Sharing date: July 05, 2019; Date of access: April 11, 2023
- URL – 5 <https://www.facebook.com/sumqayitresmishife/posts/1421796161299793/> Sharing date: May 15, 2018; Date of access: April 11, 2023
- URL – 6 From authors's collage

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*Oličenje muškosti u folkloru:  
Čuvanje tajne od žena u Azerbejdžanu  
u kontekstu stvarnog i virtuelnog društvenog okruženja*

Članak istražuje razloge za čuvanja tajni od od ženskog dela društva u stvarnom i virtuelnom društvenom okruženju Azerbejdžana. Istraživanje je pokazalo da maskulinitet u društvu stvara folklorne stereotipe koji zabranjuju prenošenje tajni ženama i, s druge strane, zabranjuju povezivanje žena sa muškim društvenim okruženjem.

Na osnovu azerbejdžanskih bajki, šala i poslovice, analizirano je oličenje maskuliniteta u folkloru. Kao rezultat istraživanja, utvrđeno je da otkrivanje tajne ženi u sociokulturnom okruženju Azerbejdžana znači lišavanje muškosti.

U članku se takođe istražuje koncept muškaraca koji čuvaju tajne od žena u okviru virtuelnog društvenog okruženja. Primeri iz internet folkloru, koji je nedavno postao kulturna stvarnost, odabrani su i analizirani kako bi se objasnili stereotipi muškosti. Studija otkriva da se, za razliku od tradicionalnih folklornih činjenica, koncept muškaraca koji čuvaju tajnu od žena u virtuelnom društvenom okruženju manifestuje na ironičniji i komičniji način. Aktualnost stereotipa muškosti u kontekstu smeha i ironije objašnjava se kao alternativa tradiciji i slobodnijim stavom prema stereotipima u internet folkloru.

*Ključne reči:* muškost, čuvanje tajne od žena, virtuelno okruženje, internet folklor



*L'incarnation de la masculinité dans le folklore:  
garder les secrets devant les femmes en Azerbaïdjan  
dans le contexte de l'environnement social réel et virtuel*

L'article explore les raisons de garder les secrets devant la partie féminine de la société dans l'environnement réel et virtuel social de l'Azerbaïdjan. L'étude a montré que la masculinité crée dans la société des stéréotypes qui interdisent la transmission des secrets aux femmes, et qui, de l'autre côté interdisent la mise en relation des femmes avec un environnement social masculin.

C'est à partir des contes de fées, des plaisanteries et des dictons azerbaïdjanais qu'a été analysée l'incarnation de la masculinité dans le folklore. La recherche démontre que le dévoilement d'un secret à une femme dans l'environnement socioculturel de l'Azerbaïdjan est interprété comme une perte de masculinité.

Dans l'article est aussi exploré le concept des hommes qui gardent leurs secrets devant les femmes dans le cadre de l'environnement social virtuel. Les exemples tirés du folklore d'Internet, récemment devenu une réalité culturelle, ont été choisis et analysés pour pouvoir expliquer les stéréotypes de la masculinité. L'étude révèle qu'à la différence des faits folkloriques traditionnels, le concept des hommes qui gardent le secret devant les femmes dans l'environnement social virtuel se manifeste d'une manière plus ironique et plus comique. L'actualité des stéréotypes de la masculinité dans le contexte du rire et de l'ironie s'explique comme une alternative à la tradition et par une plus libre attitude envers les stéréotypes dans le folklore d'Internet.

*Mots clés:* masculinité, garder les secrets devant les femmes, environnement virtuel, folklore d'Internet

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