

**FABULAMUNDI
PLAYWRITING
EUROPE
NEW VOICES**



Reimagining possibilities, rebuilding realities

GENDER BALANCE
AND WOMEN REPRESENTATION
IN CONTEMPORARY PLAYWRITING

Maria Grosso

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“A play is not just a script; it’s a landscape.”¹

Section 1 - Introduction

Gender inequality – as well as discrimination against any social minority – remains evident in almost all European employment sectors. It has therefore become a priority for recent European Union development programmes. The live entertainment sector is no exception: its dynamics are increasingly analysed and mapped, revealing some alarming patterns:

There is a ‘noteworthy absence’ of people from minority backgrounds in theatres. Gender inequality is considerable, though not always easy to see at first glance. Only parts of the data revealed women are more present in ‘stereotypically female occupations’ and ‘less present at the top of the hierarchy, with their contractual situation less secure than for men’. On stage, men were more visible than women in programme credits (six men for every four women), and men dominate the ‘prestigious positions’ of playwright, director and technical staff. By contrast, women are the majority in roles such as costumes and hairdressing.²

Although institutional, political, and legislative measures exist to contain – or even reverse – these inequalities, they remain insufficient. It is therefore urgent not only to devise new solutions, but also to combine complementary strategies to increase the effectiveness of those already implemented.

To speak of gender discrimination in entertainment is also to speak of discrimination present in many professional sectors. In other words, it reflects a broader process of social inequality that permeates society at large, compromising the emancipation and empowerment of women and other disadvantaged groups in daily life.

How, then, can we build lasting change? And more importantly, how can we contribute to it in our daily professional practice within live entertainment, particularly in creative fields?

¹ V. De Simone, *Listening to the Future: Fabulamundi Beyond the Stage*, in AA. VV., *Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre. A Casebook*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2025, p. 104.

² H. Wiley, *Foreword*, in A. Casini, S. Sepulchre et al., *Gender Equality & Diversity in European Theatres. A Study*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2021, pp. 4-5.

These are the questions that frame the reflections in the following pages. The aim is not only to suggest good practices, but also to propose a new approach to gender inequality: one that recognises inclusive transformation of the *collective imaginary* as an essential prerequisite for institutional interventions.

In this context, the European network *Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe* has played a pivotal role. Active for years in fostering contemporary dramaturgy across Europe, it has consistently prioritised inclusivity – especially gender inclusivity – in shaping its interventions in today's theatrical landscape.

Within *New Voices*, the most recent edition of the network's activities funded by Creative Europe, gender equality has become a cornerstone of the three-year programme (2023-2025). The reflections presented here emerge *from* this framework, exploring how to further strengthen Fabulamundi's longstanding commitment to equality and how to extend its practices beyond the stage, into the wider socio-cultural sphere. In doing so, they build on the good practices developed in recent years and on the innovative perspectives that the performing arts continue to generate – both through established professionals and through exchanges with the new voices of emerging authors.

In the following pages, therefore, we present a testimony of contemporary dramaturgical practice – practical, committed, and militant – demonstrating how theatre can contribute to building an inclusive, dynamic environment sensitive to the complexities of its communities. The reflections move from methodological premises (Section 2) to an analysis of the broader context (Section 3), before focusing on Fabulamundi's activities (Section 4) and their role in shaping new socio-cultural imaginaries. The conclusion (Section 5) underscores how theatre, by reshaping imaginary and representation, can drive broader social change.

By focusing on the activities of the Fabulamundi network – long engaged in fostering a culture of contemporary dramaturgy across Europe – we seek to highlight how the creative contribution of today's and tomorrow's theatre authors can drive cultural change. This change begins on stage but extends to the wider social sphere, becoming an indispensable factor in safeguarding gender equality at the community level.

The key contribution lies in both the *methodologies* of stage composition and the *training* strategies used to transmit them to new generations. These practices shape the imaginative processes that can either reinforce or dismantle gender inclusion in society, reaffirming the close link between representation and the horizons of representation, between social organisation and the cultural substratum on which it rests.

Such a process of emancipation and socio-political renewal finds in *art* one of its principal engines. By consciously managing the languages, narratives, and forms of representation presented on stage, theatre can act as a catalyst for lasting transformation in our daily actions.

Section 2 – (Pseudo)methodological premise

This study adopts an interdisciplinary approach.

It is difficult – and dangerously reductive – to confine a reflection that links phenomena as different as art and social inclusivity to a single disciplinary field. What unites them, above all, is the human experience they both express.

Artistic activity today cannot be considered in isolation from the socio-cultural and political context in which it develops. This is even more true for performative arts, which involve the body directly and thus call into question modes of relating to others and to the world. In other words, contemporary theatre must be understood in relation to the *embodied socio-cultural imaginaries* of the societies that produce it.

When addressing gender inclusivity in contemporary dramaturgy, at least two complementary approaches are required. The first is explicitly artistic, grounded in theatrical practice and in the methods and forms of writing employed. The second is socio-anthropological, analysing how dramaturgy attentive to gender issues can activate dynamics within a community.

Numerous studies³ have stressed the urgency of combining the two perspectives, in order to avoid misrepresenting the conditions in which they develop – conditions that are now so intertwined as to be inseparable.

It is within this spurious horizon that the present reflection intends to place itself. Its methodology draws on a selection of existing literature, much of it produced within the European Union and related cultural bodies, as well as recent reports on the structure of the European Cultural and Creative Sectors (CCS), with a focus on theatre. Many of these studies⁴ remain partial, conducted within specific production contexts and often in the absence of systematic, Europe-wide data collection. For this reason, each piece of evidence cited here is carefully contextualised according to the conditions in which it was gathered.

To complement this material, first-hand accounts were collected from Fabulamundi partners during the 2023-2025 *New Voices* edition, including activity reports, participant feedback, and discussions with specialists engaged in training workshops. These testimonies were integrated with insights from previous

³ By way of example, see, for instance, A. Casini, S. Sepulchre et al., *Gender Equality & Diversity in European Theatres. A Study*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2021, pp. 41-42.

⁴ See, for example, A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors. Report of the OMC (Open Method of Coordination) Working Group of Member States' Experts*, Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union, 2021, p. 41.

research by experts in dramaturgy and theatre translation linked to the network, such as the work of Margherita Laera (University of Kent, UK) conducted in 2019-2020⁵.

Because this research was developed *at the behest of* the Fabulamundi network, its scope is deliberately specific. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive treatment of gender inequality at either the social or the theatrical level. Instead, it focuses on how, within a defined field of artistic practice, efforts are being made to promote a form of inclusivity that is more conscious, mature, and lasting. The aim is to frame Fabulamundi's commitment – long-standing but increasingly urgent in this edition – within a structured reflection on how gender balance might be rethought through dramaturgical practice.

Given these premises, two different approaches – which should never be understood as mutually contradictory, but rather as complementary – can be identified.

The first, closer to sociology, anthropology, politics, and economics, documents the measurable variables of gender inequality in the cultural and creative sectors. This quantitative approach, already well developed, is essential for mapping the phenomenon but less suited to highlighting the specificity of Fabulamundi's work.

To better highlight Fabulamundi's contribution, we adopt a second analytical perspective. This approach builds on the sociological findings of existing studies – largely produced through the first, quantitative method and used here as contextual premises (see paragraph 3.1) – but shifts towards a theatre-specific analysis of the transformative power of artistic creation. The focus is on how theatrical writing, through its linguistic, narrative, and formal structures, and through the imaginative mechanisms it activates in audiences, can shape the culture of the communities that create and receive these texts. In doing so, it can radically expand the possibilities for action and relationships within those communities.

This second strategy, hybrid in nature and difficult to fit into a fixed methodological framework, is necessarily more qualitative than the first. It draws on data that are often complex to identify, quantify, or systematise. Its strength lies instead in the ongoing dialogue with members of the network – first and foremost the playwrights – as well as in the rich multimedia and multidisciplinary documentation generated by the activities. This makes it particularly well suited to capturing the specificity of Fabulamundi's interventions and their pivotal role in the creative process of dramaturgical and scenic composition.

The discussion of these two analytical strategies also resonates with recent reflections by other scholars, notably Annalisa Casini and Sarah Sepulchre, who have studied cultural diversity in the theatre sector. In the introduction to their 2021 research, commissioned by the European Theatre Convention, they write:

⁵ M. Laera, *Playwriting in Europe. Mapping Ecosystems and Practices with Fabulamundi*, London, Routledge, 2022.

When addressing cultural diversity, there are two aspects to take into account: first, the diversity of the people who create the artistic works and, second, the diversity of what is represented in these artistic works. This study tackles these two aspects by examining the diversity of the people, or human resources, working in theatres and by analysing the diversity of cultural programming. [...]

The second aim was to evaluate whether people belonging to a so-called “minority” (i.e. female, non-Caucasian, non-binary, homosexual, altersexual, trans*, queer, disabled people) suffered from discrimination (in this context, that might mean less access to resources and power, or greater exposure to prejudice and interpersonal, organisational or societal forms of discrimination).

Then, concerning cultural productions, the present study aimed at evaluating whether the ensembles of, or the companies performing at, ETC theatres were diverse in and of themselves and whether the content of the programmes directly or indirectly addressed the issue of diversity.⁶

Although Casini and Sepulchre’s premise considers “cultural programming” in slightly different terms than will be used in the following pages⁷, it underscores the importance of distinguishing between two focal points for research: on the one hand, analysing the characteristics and social structures of theatre workers; on the other, analysing the results of their work and what is conveyed to audiences. While their research emphasises the immediate, almost visual visibility of minorities in productions – paying attention to communication materials and to who is literally on stage – the reflections here focus instead on the more or less inclusive, and potentially transformative, imaginaries that those same programmes can generate. What unites both approaches is the recognition of a dual movement between organisational structures and artistic outcomes, and the need for dialogue between existing studies in order to enrich, rather than merely replicate, available data.

On this basis, it is reasonable to suggest that the reflections presented here – and above all Fabulamundi’s contribution to social integration – extend beyond the field of gender inequality. They can and should be a starting point for raising awareness of discrimination more broadly, regardless of the variable at stake, and especially in cases where multiple forms of disadvantage intersect. This explains why intersectionality and the development of intersectional sensitivity have been central to many training sessions for playwrights and partners during the 2023-2025 edition of *Fabulamundi New Voices*.

⁶ A. Casini, S. Sepulchre et al., *Gender Equality & Diversity in European Theatres*, cit., pp. 8-9. The authors return to this concept later on, see p. 43.

⁷ Ibid., p. 31, my italics: “We have analysed diversity in the *programme brochures*. These do not reflect all the people who have collaborated in a show; rather, they only include the people who are recognised and made visible by the theatre.” In the following pages, as will be seen, cultural programming will instead be understood by paying particular attention to the content offered and the imagery conveyed by the stage; therefore, *also* (but not only) in light of the levels of representation that minorities find within the programming offered by each theatre.

At the same time, the scope of this research must be specified. The analysis does not focus primarily on mapping gender inequalities across the cultural and creative sectors (CCS). Rather, it examines how theatre, and dramaturgy in particular, can contribute to transforming the structures of thought and action that underpin social life, thereby helping to reduce gender discrimination within the broader community.

Accordingly, the reflection pays close attention to the practices developed and promoted within the Fabulamundi network: how they are structured and how their methodologies are transmitted by contemporary dramaturgs to new generations. What mattered during the 2023-2025 period were not only the plays written by the nineteen selected authors, but also their capacity to train the “New Voices” – the emerging authors whose imaginative worlds will shape the theatre of the future. The analysis therefore concentrates on the themes explored in the workshops, the range of pedagogical methods adopted, and the diverse backgrounds of both tutors and participants.

In these terms, dramatic writing is understood less as a fixed product than as a process. Contemporary dramaturgy – and even more so the dramaturgy of the future – emerges from relationships, encounters, debates, and exchanges that shape it day by day. This ongoing dialogue generates visions, perspectives, and opportunities, producing fluid and evolving forms of thought through which we engage with the complexity of everyday life – a complexity that integrates, on equal footing, both the art through which humanity expresses itself and the social structures through which it organizes and relates.

Section 3 – Context

3.1 Gender in European contemporary theatre

Although this study does not focus primarily on statistical results, it is important to begin with a socio-structural overview of theatre – and dramaturgy in particular – in order to understand the relevance of Fabulamundi’s activities. This overview summarises the main features of gender inequality in the European cultural and creative sectors, with a particular focus on live performance.

Gender inequality remains a structural fact of European society, one that EU policies increasingly seek to address. The cultural and creative sector (CCS) offers a telling example⁸. On the one hand, it reflects

⁸ See A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 23.

broader dynamics of Western society; on the other, it demonstrates the crucial role of artistic production in deconstructing the imaginaries that sustain inequality and, therefore, of the inequalities themselves.

A first element to highlight is the presence of vicious circles within systemic processes: inequalities reproduce themselves, creating recursive structures that both perpetuate and conceal discrimination. While awareness of gender imbalance has grown, and the historical role of women artists is increasingly recognised, the performing arts remain male-dominated, especially in leadership positions, still largely held by white, middle-class men over fifty. These entrenched structures reinforce patriarchal dynamics shaped by long-standing historical sedimentation and capitalist models of competition. They also exacerbate the under-representation of diversity, making it difficult for individuals outside dominant groups to gain recognition and legitimacy thus increasing the coping strategies they are forced to resort to in order to access, survive or even advance within the system itself⁹.

Within this process, a decisive role is played by the affirmation and reinforcement of gender stereotypes – both in relation to tasks and to how they are performed. These stereotypes define social expectations, shape access to resources and opportunities, and reinforce traditional role divisions by assigning professional characteristics based on gender. Over time, the perpetuation of these models, together with more or less formalised educational pathways that unconsciously reproduce them, leads younger generations to internalise stereotypes that influence their choices and behaviours. In this way, a prejudicial socio-professional organisation of the sector, heavily marked by gender bias, is preserved and transmitted.¹⁰

A striking paradox emerges when comparing education with employment. Women are the majority of students in cultural and artistic disciplines, yet this advantage is not reflected in their entry into the workforce – still less in career advancement. This points to significant structural and systemic barriers to the professional development of women in the cultural and creative fields¹¹. In practice, women remain less active, less well paid, less represented, and more often confined to positions of limited responsibility than their male colleagues¹². They also face challenges of integration in a sector long dominated by white, middle-class men over fifty, many of whom perceive women's growing presence in positions of authority as unsettling¹³.

⁹ J. Mazzocchetti, S. Sepulchre, J. Vanhaelen, *Gender Equality in European Theatres and Artistic Programmes 2024. A study*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2024, pp. 92-94.

¹⁰ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (with the exception of the audio-visual sector)*, 2020, pp. 24-25.

¹¹ See A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 27.

¹² EENCA, *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 38.

¹³ J. Mazzocchetti, S. Sepulchre, J. Vanhaelen, *Gender Equality in European Theatres and Artistic Programmes 2024*, cit., pp. 80-81.

Career prospects are further undermined by the working conditions typical of the cultural and creative sector: high demands for flexibility, frequent and unpredictable travel, irregular schedules, and project-based contracts¹⁴. Although female professionals possess these qualities, such conditions are difficult to reconcile with the unpaid care work that disproportionately falls on them¹⁵, particularly when they have children, as well as with the constraints linked to potential motherhood¹⁶.

Employment in the arts is also frequently freelance or self-employed, relying on informal networks, self-promotion, and unpaid labour. Fixed-term and part-time contracts are widespread, reducing protections and increasing precarity. Many professionals are compelled to take on multiple jobs¹⁷ or rely on family and friends for support in order to manage instability and lack of security. Women's artistic work also tends to have less visibility and lower economic value than men's¹⁸, further widening the gender pay gap and exacerbating precarity in the sector.

The consequences¹⁹ of these conditions are recursive. The most immediate effect is the persistence of the pay gap: women are often paid less for equivalent work and face restricted career advancement, discouraging long-term engagement. Another consequence is the *care gap*, which makes balancing professional and private life particularly difficult. This results in overwork in poorly paid positions, discontinuity of employment, and unequal access to the labour market, increasing the risks of poverty and exclusion. These inequalities extend into retirement, contributing to a *pension gap* that places older women in the arts at greater risk of economic vulnerability.

The contractual and economic weakness of women in the entertainment industry also limits their visibility and recognition, both within the profession and among audiences. Their underrepresentation in decision-making roles reduces pluralism of voices and visions in the cultural sector²⁰, impoverishing its content and economic potential, and reinforcing rigid stereotypes about women's professional and social roles. These stereotypes not only constrain women at work but also shape broader cultural narratives.

¹⁴ A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 28.

¹⁵ See A. Rinaldi, *Le signore non parlano di soldi. Quanto ci costa la disparità di genere?*, Milan, Fabbri Editori, 2023, pp. 17-45. Unless otherwise indicated, translations from works originally written in Italian are my own, and I am solely responsible for any errors or inaccuracies.

¹⁶ EENCA, *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 30.

¹⁷ A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 28.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-86.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 92-94.

Particular attention must be paid to the persistence of gender stereotypes²¹. Across Western society – and especially in theatre and live performance – women confront a network of structural prejudices and systemic obstacles, often implicit and invisible. The abstract, elusive nature of these mechanisms makes discrimination especially difficult to address, since it rarely assumes clear or recognisable forms that can be directly countered.

As one testimony collected by ETC is particularly effective in this regard:

It's not that we feel that we are on the margins. You can see that there is a patriarchy and there is always an extra effort that a woman has to do. It's not necessarily that somebody talks badly, or that there is sexual abuse or something. I haven't experienced something like that. I'm very honest. But there are a lot of things that are happening below. And there's a long way to go to leave all this prejudice of the past behind, all these things that we were used to accepting because we were women.²²

In European society, there still persists – sometimes unconsciously in men, but even more covertly in women – the belief that roles involving decision-making, economic power, or prestige are more naturally suited to men. Women, in turn, are channelled into specific, limited tasks deemed more consistent with their culturally defined²³ (and therefore arbitrary) profile. This is reflected in the progressive reduction of women in leadership roles, especially within larger economic structures²⁴. Resistance here is often not material but mental²⁵: a shared imaginary that subtly influences decision-making processes. In some cases, measures designed to support female employment have paradoxical effects, fostering doubts about the competence of women in senior positions, who are sometimes perceived as legitimised by regulation rather than by merit. This creates additional pressure for women to prove their skills within an already competitive and often hostile environment.²⁶

In live performance, aesthetic parameters and the centrality of the body add further critical dimensions. Artistic evaluation is often linked to physical characteristics such as age, heightening women's vulnerability to abuse and harassment. Power imbalances in the sector²⁷, combined with the physical intimacy inherent in stage work, further increase risks. Because artistic practice exposes the body and voice²⁸ to public scrutiny, the potential for sexual violence within the profession cannot be ignored.

²¹ This aspect will be revisited, among others, in the next paragraph.

²² J. Mazzocchetti, S. Sepulchre, J. Vanhaelen, *Gender Equality in European Theatres and Artistic Programmes 2024*, cit., p. 77.

²³ Ibid., pp. 76-78.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 79.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 78.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

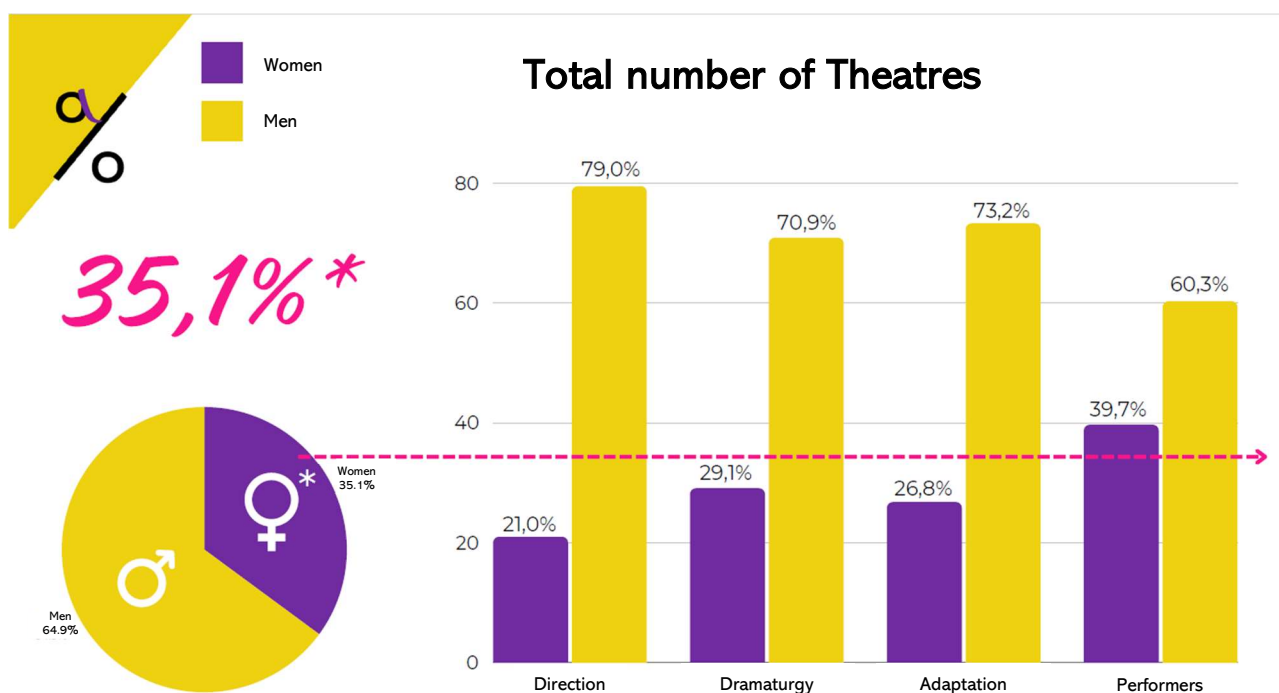
²⁷ A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 75.

²⁸ EENCA, *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 38.

The incidence of abuse in the performing arts has been highlighted by movements such as #MeToo, which helped to raise awareness, stimulate public debate, and prompt countermeasures. Yet there remains a dangerous lack of reliable data, linked to the stigma²⁹ surrounding abuse and, above all, its reporting. This absence of evidence compounds inequality and reinforces women’s vulnerability.

For all these reasons, theatre and the performing arts remain strongly marked by *gender segregation*, both vertical and horizontal. Women continue to encounter the “glass ceiling,”³⁰ with their presence decreasing sharply in positions of prestige, decision-making, and leadership³¹ – conversely, gender inclusivity increases as the power, visibility and status of professionals decrease, as well as that of the organisation in which they work³².

At the same time, horizontal segregation channels them into certain roles while reserving others for men. Both forms of segregation undermine inclusivity, narrowing the scope of the sector’s cultural imaginary.



Distribution of main theatre roles based on gender in Italy, 2020-2024.
 Source: Amleta, in collaboration with the University of Brescia, *Nuova Mappatura 2020-2024*, available at: <https://www.amleta.org/mappatura-20202024/>.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 31-32.

³⁰ A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 102.

³¹ M. Bannò et al., *La disparità di genere nel settore teatrale: analisi dei teatri nazionali e dei teatri di rilevante interesse culturale*, Amleta Association and University of Brescia, 2024, p. 18.

³² Ibid., p. 24.

The severity of the phenomenon is further exacerbated by the significant tendency of vertical segregation to produce gender bias in the process of casting artists for specific productions, as well as within theatre staff: it has been observed that where male management prevails, the hiring of male professionals also prevails, while in the more limited cases where management is predominantly female or equal, similar gender equality is respected and maintained among the professionals involved³³. In the words of Heidi Wiley, Executive Director of the European Theatre Convention: “The more male a theatre’s playwrights and directors were, the more likely they were to employ men on their staff or cast. The more diverse the directing team, the more diverse the cast. One major conclusion from the data is that women employ a gender-balanced cast”³⁴.

The vertical segregation described above is also linked to marked horizontal segregation, which in the performing arts takes the form of a greater concentration of men than women in the roles of authors, directors, adapters, artistic directors, and managers, while women mainly hold positions as performers – such as actresses and dancers – costume designers or teachers and trainers³⁵.

This phenomenon is particularly significant, especially given the powerful impact that directors and playwrights have on the collective imaginary that art helps to shape and disseminate: the dissemination and influence of an alternative point of view, or better still, one that is different and complementary to the dominant one, is consequently greatly reduced³⁶.

Given these assumptions, it is interesting to analyse the conditions of gender inequality within the more specific context of European theatre. A decisive contribution in this regard is provided by the qualitative research conducted by Margherita Laera on behalf of Fabulamundi between 2019 and 2020³⁷, whose reference information was gathered by consulting experts in dramaturgy and theatre translation working in Austria, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Poland, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom. The aim of the research was to define a guide for those working in the field of contemporary dramaturgy, in order to promote and guide their activities in a European context. Although “the findings on each country should be taken as a snapshot of what the experts we talked to have shared, rather than as statistically representative data”³⁸, they nevertheless provide an effective picture of the perceptions,

³³ See A. Casini, S. Sepulchre et al., *Gender Equality & Diversity in European Theatres*, cit., pp. 39 and 44; J. Mazzocchetti, S. Sepulchre, J. Vanhaelen, *Gender Equality in European Theatres and Artistic Programmes 2024*, cit., pp. 13 and 33-47; EENCA, *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., pp. 38-40.

³⁴ H. Wiley, *Foreword*, cit., p. 5.

³⁵ EENCA, *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., pp. 25-26.

³⁶ M. Bannò et al., *La disparità di genere nel settore teatrale*, cit., p. 20.

³⁷ M. Laera, *La drammaturgia contemporanea in Europa. Una mappatura degli ecosistemi e delle pratiche*, trad. M. Laera, M. Grosso, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2023 (M. Laera, *Playwriting in Europe. Mapping Ecosystems and Practices with Fabulamundi*, London, Routledge, 2022).

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31. Original text, not my translation. However, the page references are taken from the Italian edition.

experiences and situations that must be dealt with when working in contemporary playwriting in Europe, thus providing a significant representation of the level of integration based on gender that has been achieved and accepted to date.

In Austria³⁹, which ranks 13th in the European ranking based on the Gender Equality Index⁴⁰, levels of diversity and inclusiveness improved in the decade leading up to 2020, and there is a high level of awareness of gender issues: here, in fact, only 20% of respondents believed that female playwrights had equal opportunities compared to their male colleagues, and 40% believed that the same was true for authors belonging to the LGBTQI+ community.

In Germany⁴¹, on the other hand, there was greater confidence than in Austria regarding levels of equality in the field of playwriting, despite a good level of awareness of gender inclusivity issues: here, 63% of respondents believed that both women and members of the LGBTQI+ community enjoyed equal opportunities compared to male playwrights. Furthermore, German professionals were particularly aware of the existence of government policies, funding bodies, activist campaigns and theatre companies that actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion, even if, according to one respondent, “German theatre is still a place of power, dominated by white and able-bodied men over 50”⁴².

The case of the Czech Republic⁴³ is quite different, ranking 21st in the European ranking established in 2019 based on the Gender Equality Index and 33rd out of 39 countries for levels of LGBTQI+ community inclusion in Europe⁴⁴, where there is a lack of awareness of gender inclusivity issues. Although there appears to be no debate on the inclusion and representation of minorities in the arts, and theatres are not required to comply with specific guidelines in support of equality, diversity and inclusion, 70% of respondents in the Czech Republic believed that female playwrights had equal opportunities compared to their male colleagues, and the figure rose to 80% for authors belonging to the LGBTQI+ community. However, it should be borne in mind that Czech playwrights are extremely few in number and are often hampered by a lack of support for travel, as well as by the heavy constraints of family life. This phenomenon forces them to focus mainly on adapting existing texts rather than writing new original content.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 47-48.

⁴⁰ The reference values for defining the European ranking based on the Gender Equality Index referred to in Margherita Laera's research are those for 2019. See European Institute for Gender Equality, “Gender Equality Index 2019”.

⁴¹ M. Laera, *La drammaturgia contemporanea in Europa*, cit., pp. 48-50.

⁴² Ibid., p. 49. Original text, not my translation. However, the page references are taken from the Italian edition.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 54-56.

⁴⁴ This second figure is taken by Margherita Laera from the IGLA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – Europe) Raking, “Country Raking”, 2021.

In France⁴⁵, which ranks third in the European Gender Equality Index, the situation appears to be radically different. Here, gender equality is given considerable attention within the agenda of the Ministry of Culture, which monitors levels of equality, although there is no financial support for gender equality and inclusiveness. In France, there are significant movements that promote, monitor and support gender equality, power distribution and representation. Awareness of the phenomenon also seems to be good among the experts consulted: while 60% of them believed that playwrights belonging to the LGBTQI+ community had equal opportunities compared to their colleagues outside it, only 30% of respondents thought that female playwrights received equal treatment compared to male authors.

Italy⁴⁶, which ranks 14th among European countries on the Gender Equality Index and 35th for the protection of LGBTQI+ rights, presents a more alarming situation. In the theatre world, discriminatory attitudes are particularly prevalent, with an extremely limited number of women among established playwrights, actors and directors, as well as among artistic directors of theatres and festivals. Minorities are poorly represented and protected in the arts, including in terms of state funding, and respondents demonstrated a lack of knowledge about organisations working to support equality, diversity and inclusion, as well as those dedicated to monitoring data in this regard. Furthermore, there are no concrete measures or guidelines in place to support equal opportunities and combat gender bias and racial discrimination. In Italy, there is also a low level of awareness of issues related to gender integration in the theatre, demonstrating a significant underestimation of the problem: 48.5% of respondents believed that women have equal opportunities compared to their male colleagues, and 66.7% considered the rights of authors belonging to the LGBTQI+ community to be equal.

The situation also appears critical in Poland⁴⁷, which ranks 24th in the Gender Equality Index and 43rd in terms of LGBTQI+ rights protection. Here too, there is low awareness of discrimination and a significant underestimation of its extent: 55% of respondents believed that female authors had equal rights to men, and 60% believed the same about playwrights from the LGBTQI+ community. Furthermore, the experts Margherita Laera spoke to did not seem to be aware of a particularly high number of campaigns or organisations that support or monitor levels of equality, diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities in the arts and theatre.

In Romania⁴⁸, ranked 25th in the Gender Equality Index and 37th in terms of LGBTQI+ rights protection, there are significant levels of discrimination against minorities and poor protection of basic human rights. Here too, the level of awareness among respondents of issues related to gender integration in the theatre was rather low, with 77% of them convinced that women receive equal opportunities compared

⁴⁵ M. Laera, *La drammaturgia contemporanea in Europa*, cit., pp. 61-62.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 66-68.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 72-73.

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 78-79.

to playwrights and 58% willing to support the same for LGBTQI+ authors: However, these rates do not seem to be reflected in the actual lives of those involved in playwriting and theatre, and there is also little awareness of campaigns or movements supporting equality, diversity and inclusion in those same areas. Spain⁴⁹, on the other hand, pays considerable attention to minority rights, ranking ninth in the Gender Equality Index and eighth in terms of protecting the rights of the LGBTQI+ community. Not only is there a law, dating back to 2007, protecting equality, especially on the basis of gender, but there is also a good level of awareness of the issue, with 34.5% of respondents believing that women have equal opportunities compared to male playwrights, while the percentage rises to 62.1% when it comes to LGBTQI+ authors. However, awareness of the existence of government policies, funding bodies and campaigns supporting equality, diversity and inclusion within the theatre was not very high.

Among the areas analysed by Margherita Laera's research, the United Kingdom⁵⁰ ranks particularly well, coming fifth in Europe for gender equality and tenth for the protection of LGBTQI+ rights. Not only is there considerable public attention to equal opportunities and, consequently, similar issues are also covered in the main news channels, but above all, there is a high level of awareness of diversity and inclusion: the percentages among respondents are reversed, with 64% of professionals convinced that female playwrights do not have equal opportunities compared to men and 50% believing that the situation is similar for authors from the LGBTQI+ community. In the UK, there are government policies, funding bodies and campaigns to support equality, diversity and inclusion in the theatre, as well as initiatives to monitor progress and state funding bodies that guide the distribution of funds to support and safeguard diversity in the arts. Another significant fact, especially in light of the discussion that will follow in the next few pages, is that based on statistics from the United Kingdom, it can be seen that active participation in the theatre and arts sector in campaigns to combat discrimination is a driving force within a broader process of social change, thus confirming the importance of the role played by the arts in transforming customs within a community.

The data collected by Margherita Laera also provides further useful food for thought, which can be extended not only to gender inequality, but also to discrimination based on other parameters, such as sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability. In each of these cases, it is important not only to assess the actual incidence of inequality and the lack of integration of minorities, but also the level of awareness of internal discrimination demonstrated by the communities in each country. This aspect is particularly important not only because, as already mentioned, the analysis was based primarily on the perceptions of respondents in relation to the phenomena investigated, but also because, even when this comparison was feasible, it was not always possible to find confirmation between the perceptions themselves and

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 85-86.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 92-94.

the statistical analyses conducted on an international scale: in fact, the countries in which respondents underestimated the incidence of discrimination within their own countries were often the very countries in which integration and equality were not particularly well protected.

This data is interesting because it shows how inequality can be dangerously correlated with awareness of the phenomenon itself on an inversely proportional basis. It is therefore necessary to always view this aspect in highly critical terms, given that when discrimination is perpetrated, it is difficult to be aware that it is happening and, therefore, not only is there little awareness that one is practising it oneself, but also that one is suffering from it. The phenomenon is alarming and, once again, correlates with the imaginary and imaginative abilities of those affected by it. Spreading an anti-discriminatory culture means, first and foremost, allowing the establishment of a perceptive disposition that enables discrimination to be recognised where it occurs. In these terms, the importance of cultural and cognitive intervention clearly emerges, which art, as a means of constructing worldviews, perceptions, self-awareness and imaginative abilities, has always been able to exercise.

At this point, we can return to the concept of the *vicious circle* mentioned earlier – a theme that has run through much of the analysis so far. The phenomena described reveal how women’s chances of obtaining prestigious or better-paid positions, or of accessing the resources essential for career development, are repeatedly reduced. This, in turn, reinforces pre-existing gender stereotypes⁵¹. Women are still perceived as “less suited” than men to positions of prestige, increasingly bound to domestic and informal care work rather than to professional careers, apparently less skilled or less capable of advancement. These perceptions are further compounded by the lack of time many women can dedicate to self-promotion or networking, given the heavy burden of care responsibilities that falls on them.

This mechanism also affects women’s access to training opportunities and – more profoundly, as will be explored in the following pages – the imaginative horizons of society as a whole. By restricting women’s professional pathways, society limits its own ability to envisage alternative scenarios: different human and professional trajectories, new models of development, or unconventional solutions. In this way, the number of experiences considered possible or legitimate is drastically reduced.

At its core, this is above all a reduction of our collective capacity to imagine new futures. Without such imaginative possibilities, we lose the ability to attempt different paths, to explore uncharted routes, to pursue unprecedented solutions. Here lies the decisive role of art – and of theatre in particular – in its power to transform, to shape, and to expand the imaginary, producing new perceptions and new ways of thinking for each of us.

Where there is weakness, however, there also lies a significant and crucial margin for intervention.

⁵¹ EENCA, *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., pp. 27-29.

3.2 Closing the gender dream gap: when stage narratives and language can redefine the realm of the possible

When we think of a woman working in live entertainment, we almost instinctively picture her as an actress. It would be easy to dismiss this as mere prejudice, but the reality is more complex. Acting is not only the most common theatrical profession among women⁵²; it is also the most visible from outside the stage and therefore the easiest for those unfamiliar with theatre to recognise. In other words, the idea that a woman in theatre can only be an actress is deeply entrenched in the *collective imaginary*.

A similar mechanism – this time less linked to visibility and more to horizontal professional segregation – applies to other theatre professions, reinforcing automatic role assignments based on gender. Costume design, make-up, and hairdressing are readily associated with women, while roles such as lighting designer or stagehand are rarely imagined as female. For women who wish to enter the theatre world, career paths thus appear predetermined: both they and the societies they belong to are poorly equipped to imagine alternative scenarios, and therefore to consider them genuinely feasible:

As one of our female interlocutors said: “My trajectory started when I was a teenager and I fell in love with theatre. Of course, I wanted to be an actress in the first moment, because those are the people that you see the most. Because all the other people, especially women, are invisible”. Trajectories are shaped by elements specific to singular histories (family histories, experiences, encounters...), but also gender stereotypes (“too fat to be an actress”, “not a job for women”...) and visibility of women and minorities on public stages [...]. Our interlocutors clearly expressed their desire for women and minorities *to take their place, to make their voices heard, notably through writing, dramaturgy and directing, to tell other stories, or to tell the stories of classical theatre in a different way*.⁵³

There are at least two corollaries to the mechanism just described.

The first is that it inevitably generates yet another vicious circle. Because of vertical and horizontal segregation, the key roles in shaping the imagery presented on stage – and, by extension, the collective imaginary constructed and shared with audiences – are more easily occupied by men or, more broadly, by members of privileged social groups. This makes it more likely that the relational models represented will mirror existing ones, thereby reinforcing pre-established positions of privilege. Even when these professionals adopt what might be described as an inclusive outlook, if they all come from the same social categories, the diversity represented on stage is inevitably reduced. Moreover, the larger the

⁵² In this regard, see, for example: M. Bannò et al., *La disparità di genere nel settore teatrale*, cit.

⁵³ J. Mazzocchetti, S. Sepulchre, J. Vanhaelen, *Gender Equality in European Theatres and Artistic Programmes 2024*, cit., p. 7, my italics.

audience reach and visibility of a theatre, the stronger this effect appears to be. Research has shown⁵⁴, for example, that larger theatres with higher ticket sales are not only more likely to have male artistic directors and managers, but also to present seasons dominated by plays written and directed by men. In this way, theatres with the greatest influence over the collective imaginary often concentrate cultural authority in male figures – and those with greater authority also have greater power in determining the gender distribution of professions in theatre⁵⁵.

The second corollary is even more significant. What happens in the theatre is not an isolated case, but rather part of a wider process that permeates most professions and contemporary social contexts, where vertical and horizontal inequalities – based on gender and other factors – remain deeply entrenched. If we focus only on gender, it becomes clear that certain professions, rights, and priorities are still automatically associated with men or with women⁵⁶. This limits what we consider plausible for ourselves and others, shaping the choices we make and constraining the opportunities available to us. Although progress has been made, too many career paths and life trajectories are still governed by automatic assumptions and entrenched gendered views that often operate unconsciously. It is precisely here that the concept of the *gender dream gap* becomes crucial: theatre's ability to expand imaginary, imagination and representation is essential to transforming present dynamics and paving the way toward future gender equality.

Azzurra Rinaldi, professor of political economy and director of the School of Gender Economics at Unitelma Sapienza University in Rome, writes on this subject:

The professional aspirations of young people, whether male or female, are shaped by social stereotypes about gender. [...] When we don't find people we can identify with in certain positions, we draw a clear conclusion: that job is not for us. If we do not show girls and young women female figures in leadership roles in companies, institutions, universities and the military, we *narrow the range of* career possibilities that girls imagine for themselves. This phenomenon is called the *dream gap*. [...] Girls stop dreaming and believing they can achieve any goal at around the age of 5. Their male peers, on the other hand, still hold on to their dreams. [...] Unlike boys, who have a high regard for their own gender, many 6-year-old girls tend to think that girls are not “really, really smart”. As a result, they hold back and avoid any activities that seem suitable for “really, really smart” people. This is where self-limitation begins.

⁵⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 41 and 43.

⁵⁵ See M. Bannò et al., *La disparità di genere nel settore teatrale*, cit., pp. 7-13.

⁵⁶ See, for instance, A. Bagnasco, M. Barbagli, A. Cavalli, *Corso di sociologia*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1997, pp. 303, 309-311 and 318-320.

The consequences of the *dream gap* [...] constitute a clear social injustice, but also a systemic waste, because girls who limit themselves could instead prove to be excellent. It is a pre-selection based on false criteria that leads to a collective loss of efficiency, production and wealth.⁵⁷

In other words, the *gender dream gap* – which “progressively reduces women’s expectations and ambitions”⁵⁸ – has a profound impact on how women imagine themselves and their possibilities. It narrows the capacity to picture alternative conditions to the relational and role configurations historically assigned to them, and therefore to pursue alternatives in practice.

On this basis, we can see why “female representation and representation are closely linked issues”⁵⁹ and why artistic experience, particularly in the performing arts, plays such a central role in social change. Ensuring equal gender representation in cultural and creative sectors increases the likelihood of circulating new ways of understanding and interpreting the world, thereby transforming social practices. In this way, inclusivity can be activated through a self-sustaining *virtuous circle*: the more our imaginary is nourished by perspectives and relational models that differ from the dominant ones, the more such visions are legitimised and find expression. This expands the *representative horizon* – a key term both for theatre and for our broader cultural imaginary – of what we consider possible, viable, and worth pursuing. It enlarges the opportunities that women, and society as a whole, feel entitled to envisage and realise, beyond stereotypes and beyond historical or cultural inertia.

Change in this sense is also cognitive: there can be no new ways of picturing ourselves unless the models we use to interpret reality are transformed. The silencing of voices and visions inevitably impoverishes both the cultural sector and society at large⁶⁰, making the introduction of new perspectives all the more urgent. Breaking the cultural bias that has long prevailed⁶¹ is not only necessary to combat inequality and social injustice, but also essential for the vitality of communities, which otherwise remain constrained by narrow perspectives and limited possibilities.

The decisive factor in any process of social transformation is, therefore, imaginative. The dream gap leads women to feel less entitled to aspire to certain roles or to see particular rights recognised, and this absence of entitlement in turn reinforces a system that is discriminatory at both structural and *mental* levels. The result is a self-perpetuating and tautological cycle: inequality is reproduced because it is assessed and validated according to the very logic that created it.

The process activated by the gender dream gap in shaping the imaginary does not affect women alone. It also impacts men, whose social positions and stereotypes are confirmed and reinforced, thereby

⁵⁷ A. Rinaldi, *Le signore non parlano di soldi*, cit., pp. 127-128, the first italic is mine, the other italics are original.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 195.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 125.

⁶⁰ A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 94.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 104.

narrowing their own imaginative capacities. It is not only women who may feel they lack the entitlement to dream – and thus to pursue – alternatives; men, too, often struggle to imagine women differently. Their expectations of the world are limited in ways that, while not detrimental to men themselves, restrict possibilities for everyone who is not male.

Discussing the gender dream gap – and therefore the imaginary – allows us to connect it with the role of art in transforming social dynamics. It provides a perspective that differs, at least in part, from the usual sociological or statistical analyses employed to explore this field.

If the gender dream gap constrains women’s career prospects in the performing arts – limiting them to roles readily associated with femininity, such as actress, costume designer, hairdresser, or make-up artist – it also intersects more profoundly with theatre itself. The performing arts are uniquely positioned to dismantle the dream gap precisely because they engage directly with the audience’s imagination and imaginary, shaping what society as a whole can conceive as possible.

In other words, theatre is inseparable from the way we allow ourselves to think about it – and it possesses the power to alter that very configuration. Its role is crucial not only because it prompts reflection on society and its power relations, but also because it actively contributes to shaping worldviews. This happens often beyond the rational, conscious disposition of audiences: theatre makes alternative connections and logics *experiential* rather than merely theoretical. Through art – and theatre in particular – we can encounter new ways of relating to our surroundings, new ways of structuring relationships, and new ways of weighing expectations. In doing so, theatre dismantles ingrained automatisms and constructs renewed forms of perception and possibility.

Considered in these terms, therefore, performance has the capacity to intervene directly even on the most hidden and latent mechanisms that substantiate inequality and determine the difficult-to-grasp and difficult-to-circumscribe substratum of its systemic assumptions. Practical actions aimed at removing inequalities, such as legislative measures to combat discrimination, must be corroborated by mechanisms that support a repertoire of mental hypotheses consistent with them, for instance by a cultural and imaginative substratum which, if in the past it substantiated and supported inequality, once reconfigured and reoriented, can instead play a decisive role in combating it. As stated in the 2021 OMC report⁶²: “cultural and creative expressions [...] create and present stories, perspectives and visions of the world, and as such have considerable say in shaping people’s beliefs, values and perception of reality. They are thus essential tools in promoting gender equality”⁶³.

⁶² OMC refers to the Open Method of Coordination Working Group of Member States’ Experts, which operates on behalf of the European Agenda for Culture – Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022.

⁶³ A. Menzel, ed., *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors*, cit., p. 8.

Work on the collective imaginary, while constituting a slower and less visible transformative process than policies, laws and regulations that promote equality, is nevertheless indispensable and complementary to them in that it can lead to structured and lasting change because it is structural. Its active outcome, however, for example the change that art is capable of producing in the social context that enjoys it, always comes second chronologically to the transformation of the collective imaginary, and not only with regard to the imaginary presented on stage, but also with regard to the socially shared imaginary produced by the stage itself: first, the vision presented on stage will be transformed, then the logic on which the evaluation and planning capacity of those who enjoy it is based will change, and then the concrete and daily social behaviour of a community will change, because it is based on a renewed way of understanding the world, or rather of understanding social roles, their possibilities and their relationships.

There is therefore a weak point in the process of perpetuating inequality, and it is precisely here that the performing arts can intervene more than any other means: cultural perceptions, expectations, norms and values that structure a society's worldview are, in fact, dynamic concepts that evolve and transform over time⁶⁴, and their transformability is even greater when younger generations seem to demonstrate greater awareness of the problem and are therefore more active in combating it⁶⁵. There is therefore scope for transformative impact on gender practices and inequalities, as well as on other forms of social discrimination, and the performing arts play a fundamental role in this process: working on the voices of the future therefore means working on the ways in which the future will be conceived and experienced. The theatrical horizon, which, especially during the 20th century, developed a remarkable sensitivity towards the dismantling of any form of expressive and creative automatism, is a particularly well-suited expedient for countering the automatisms that dominate the social imaginary: but in order to convey an alternative worldview and make it part of the daily lives of those who *enjoy* the theatrical experience, it is essential that the imaginary of those who *compose* the scene be renewed first and foremost.

Understood in this way, theatre once again reaffirms the importance of pedagogy as its foundation, that is, the dynamic process of transmitting and consolidating a *technique* that shapes – that is, nurtures and moulds – the human and aesthetic conduct of its artists, both present and future. Writing for the theatre thus becomes composing an imaginary world, structuring a range of possibilities for action on and off stage, creating new possible horizons and new human possibilities. The tendency to automatically attribute professional roles based on gender, as well as the quality and form of power relations that we

⁶⁴ European Expert Network on Culture and Audiovisual (EENCA), *Gender gaps in the Cultural and Creative Sectors (with the exception of the audio-visual sector)*, cit., p. 8.

⁶⁵ J. Mazzocchetti, S. Sepulchre, J. Vanhaelen, *Gender Equality in European Theatres and Artistic Programmes 2024*, cit., p. 73.

are inclined to implement based on the same parameter, are not the result of our imaginary, but rather of the capabilities (or, rather, the *incapabilities*) of our imaginary. Working on this is perhaps one of the best strategies for moving the reality of our daily lives in the direction of more lasting change.

Focusing on the transformative power of the cultural and creative sector – particularly theatre – and observing how it can (re)construct the worldview that underpins social behaviour and action, guiding them toward greater inclusivity, does not mean limiting or diminishing the aesthetic result, which in an artistic context must always remain a priority. Rather, it means critically evaluating the methods used to achieve that result and the concrete consequences that every artistic product carries with it.

Among the most immediate tools the stage employs to express and convey imagery are language and narrative. Both are deeply shaped by the formative processes each author undergoes during their education, whether institutional or informal, and both are of central importance, especially in dramaturgical writing.

From this perspective, theatrical writing and dramaturgical production can be understood as expressions of what Deleuze and Guattari call the “minor,” in their analysis of Kafka’s work⁶⁶. For them, the concept of “minor” relates to Kafka’s use of a “major” language (German) while belonging to a minority (as a Bohemian Jew of Ashkenazi descent). His revolutionary literature is described as “minor”: “not as something of poor quality or lesser value, but as something that is placed *at the margins* of the dominant language, and which at the same time allows one to inhabit this language as a foreigner, *overturning its common perception* and revealing its repressed truth”⁶⁷.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the central application of the concept of the *minor* is the attempt to inhabit one’s own language as a stranger⁶⁸. This means moving toward a revolutionary, creative use of the sound horizon of language rather than its semantic horizon – treating language not as something fully possessed, but as something that can point to an *elsewhere* that cannot be expressed through logos alone. At the same time, the “minor” carries, by the authors’ own admission, an explicitly political meaning. It is closely tied to the capacity to propose a new logic – one different from the automatic logic of daily life – through which to interpret the world. In this sense, the minor offers a new way of connecting the elements with which we coexist, a new key for weaving relationships, and a new framework for thinking about them. “Becoming minor” is a movement in the opposite direction, a path of resistance

⁶⁶ See G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Kafka. Per una letteratura minore*, trans. A. Serra, Quodlibet, 2010 (*Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1975).

⁶⁷ L. F. Clemente, *Presentazione*, in M. Dolar, *La voce del padrone. Una teoria della voce tra arte, politica e psicoanalisi*, trans. L. F. Clemente, Napoli-Salerno, Orthotes, 2014 (*A voice and nothing more*, Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006), p. 5, my italics.

⁶⁸ See G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Kafka. Per una letteratura minore*, cit., p. 32 and 43 and G. Deleuze, *Critica e clinica*, trans. A. Panaro, Milano, Raffaello Cortina Editore, 1996 (*Critique et clinique*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1993), p. 11.

that is eccentric and divergent from what is dominant, imposed, imposing, automatic, and customary. As such, the minor expresses a collective and revolutionary spirit where there is no possibility of expressing political consciousness in an explicit form. The author who expresses himself in minor literature is one who, *remaining on the margins* of the community, sees differently and manages “even more to express another potential community, to forge the tools of another consciousness and another sensibility”⁶⁹.

Understood in this sense, a “minor perspective” corresponds to another way of seeing, another way of understanding what is part of our everyday lives. It is therefore a new or renewed perception produced by a logic, a cognition, that is alternative to the majority, dominant and often obtusely automatic one that we usually adopt and which, if perpetuated, does not allow us to discover the new, limits our possibilities, dreams and rights. The revolutionary aspect of the minor, moreover, is heightened by the impact it has on the current state of affairs: it does not subvert it by destroying it, but makes new use of it. The elements on which our actions are based, in instrumental and practical terms, are always the same, but within them we insinuate ourselves with an erosive gaze and conception in order to make new use of them, thereby modifying the assumptions and structural limits that otherwise condition our possibilities for action. Only the fact of having occupied, for the most disparate reasons, a disadvantaged, minority or, more generally, eccentric position allows us to grasp the trigger point from which to develop a different perspective on events, which is the only substrate from which a new way of thinking and, consequently, of acting can derive.

It is no coincidence that Deleuze and Guattari’s reflection focuses precisely on the language used by Kafka and on the formal features of his writing, thus outlining a type of literature developed not by moving from content in search of a suitable form to express it, as is the case in mainstream literature, but on the contrary, by seeking a mode of expression capable of breaking with the usual forms in order to give rise to new branches of thought and, from this break, then moving on to the reconstruction of the content expressed, which will necessarily be in opposition to the usual order of things, in an anticipatory process in which art continues in life, or rather in which it is the experience lived through art that can change our way of living⁷⁰.

Being able to multiply the points of view present on the scene is a way of “becoming minor”, that is, a way of putting the usual, because majority, worldviews under tension and making it clear that multiple worldviews can coexist. Furthermore, multiplying the points of view on the scene shows that it is not necessarily the majority perspectives – from a historical, political, economic or cultural point of view – that are the only correct ones.

⁶⁹ G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *Kafka. Per una letteratura minore*, cit., p. 29.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Including the perspective of a minority in our languages and narratives, for instance in our imaginaries, means making less use of the tools generally monopolised by the majority, it means subversively forcing our usual worldviews, it means performing a revolutionary act, it means – in a word – acting in *political* terms.

Language is one of the main political tools we use and an essential tool for composing a dramatic text. In order to understand its significance, we must start from a central and well-established premise: language and thought are closely related, not only because our perception of the world and the cognitive processes through which we relate to those around us and our surroundings influence the structure of our linguistic expression, but also because the opposite is true, since what we are able to say, and how we say it, strongly influences the way we think and logically interpret the events of our daily lives, as well as our greater or lesser ability to attribute importance to the events we experience and the encounters that punctuate them. Language filters not only what we understand about the world, but also what we include and what we end up excluding⁷¹, to the point of making that something imperceptible and absent from our plans for action. In other words, reality influences language and language influences reality⁷². Not only is language a logic – that is, a specific way of understanding what we perceive and experience – and each language a different logic, but within each language, depending on the words we use and the syntactic structures through which we usually express ourselves or choose to express ourselves, we can propose and assert different perspectives on reality and, consequently, express and manifest “realities” that are also very different from each other. This happens, of course, because every language carries with it different nuances of meaning, making perfect translation impossible⁷³, but also because the structures of the logical connections that each language proposes are different, both in terms of syntactic construction and the etymological and cultural composition of its dictionary⁷⁴, as well as a result of

⁷¹ F. Acanfora, *Presentazione*, in V. Gheno, *Chiamami così. Normalità, diversità e tutte le parole nel mezzo*, Trento, Il margine, 2022, p. 9.

⁷² V. Gheno, *Grammamanti. Immaginare futuri con le parole*, Torino, Einaudi, 2024, p. XV.

⁷³ On this subject, see, for example, the renowned W. Benjamin, *Il compito del traduttore*, trans. M. T. Costa, Milano, Mimesis, 2023 (1^a ed. Einaudi) (*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*, in Id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol IV, T. Rexroth ed., Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1991, pp. 9-21).

⁷⁴ Despite the extensive critical debate that these conclusions have sparked, the contribution made by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf is significant. With their hypothesis of linguistic relativity, they suggested the possibility that it is not only sensory and perceptual experience that influences the language we speak, but that the opposite is also true, identifying in the typical structures of each language an element capable of decisively influencing our thinking and our perception and cognition of the world. Depending on the language we speak – based on the logical structure that characterises its forms, for example syntactic, and the processes of word construction, as well as the way in which its vocabulary divides the range of all semantic possibilities – our way of seeing the world around us will be different and, therefore, the perspective from which we understand our experience. See E. Sapir, B. L. Whorf, *Linguaggio e relatività*, M. Carassai, E. Crucianelli, eds., Rome, Castelvechi, 2017 and B. L. Whorf, *Linguaggio, pensiero e realtà*, J. B. Carroll, ed., trans. F. Cialfoni, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 1970 (*Language, Thought, and Reality*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, 1956).

different divisions of the vast semantic horizon that each term offers – in other words, because each word selects the vast possibilities of meaning in a unique and unrepeatably way, which is why there are no exact synonyms and each word always expresses a particular nuance of meaning and the object to which it refers.

Given these assumptions, it is clear that depending on our linguistic choices, we can highlight a category, a group, a subject, as well as their specific characteristics, or we can make that referent and some of its specific qualities almost imperceptible. The language we use can be very misleading, often beyond our full awareness as speakers and writers. The effects of this phenomenon are anything but negligible, especially in terms of inclusivity, since, if language is closely related to the cognition with which we understand the world, then the image that a discourse will create in the mind of those who consume it will change depending on what the language used evokes, thereby contributing to reinforcing or dismantling prejudices and interpretative biases about reality, the relationships that characterise it, and the peculiarities and rights of the individuals who populate it.

In this regard, the example of the over-extended masculine is certainly significant. This concerns only certain languages, in which the masculine plural is used generically to refer to a group of individuals composed of both women and men, or to a group of individuals whose gender is unknown. The mechanism of the over-extended masculine presupposes a correspondence, which in fact does not exist, between the masculine plural and the neuter, as if the brain of the person receiving it were perfectly capable of recognising its use without gender connotations. However, it has been shown that when faced with the use of the over-extended masculine, the human brain first decodes it as masculine and only then, as a second step, as neuter⁷⁵. Consequently, the perception and the image that is immediately produced in our minds is anything but neutral because, if we hear or use a masculine plural, we will first think of a group of male subjects and exclude any other gender from the statement. Only later, and by convention, will we then consider that masculine form as potentially including also that which is not masculine.

Returning to the concept of the gender dream gap, the impact of male overrepresentation, as well as the corresponding process of introducing and safeguarding terms, especially professional ones, reminds us once again that the words we use in our daily lives influence what we believe to be within our reach, allowing us to assume that a specific position or role can be filled by both men and women⁷⁶ and, therefore, that specific dreams and rights can be included or excluded from the possibilities available to us in the future.

⁷⁵ V. Gheno, *Grammamanti*, cit., p. XV.

⁷⁶ V. Gheno, *Chiamami così. Normalità, diversità e tutte le parole nel mezzo*, Trento, Il margine, 2022, p. 79.

Beyond the overuse of masculine terms, the same mechanism also applies to any naming process: if there is no term to indicate something, that something will not only be difficult to name, for example to express verbally, but it will also be difficult to perceive, and therefore to grasp sensorially, to think about, to understand and to include in the imagery that substantiates our choices and guides our conduct. The act of naming is central to human perception, since defining and naming oneself – and therefore also self-defining and self-naming, as well as choosing how we define and name ourselves, how we choose to name and define ourselves and others – is closely related to how much and how each person will be visible to their own and, above all, to the eyes of others. The use of correct naming allows us to exist, to be imaginable and imagined, to be included among the many possible horizons. And (also) this is art: an exercise in visions, an exercise in possible worlds.

Vera Gheno writes:

Having the opportunity to choose one's own name, to be able to tell others "call me this" or "do not call me that", is a way not only to understand each other better, but also to be more visible socially. Greater linguistic presence corresponds to greater social presence, which should come as no surprise, given that the very existence of our society depends [...] on the possession of language.⁷⁷

A historically androcentric society has contributed to the development of an androcentric language, radically influencing the flow of information within it, thus creating a world view that is, in turn, , from which much of the data concerning the specific characteristics of the female gender has been expunged, with a significant impact and consequences on women's lives⁷⁸ – and none of this has happened for reasons of mere practical and statistical convenience, since women are not fewer in number than men on our planet, but have simply been at a disadvantage compared to their male counterparts for a long time and in many different cultures.

It is therefore clear that the relationship between language and reality is in fact much more complex and layered than it may seem, since it is not only reality that influences language, but language also transforms reality. There is no doubt that a change in the concrete nature of the world around us is highly likely to lead to linguistic transformation, although the process is neither simple nor rapid, given the high resistance that human beings show towards language transformation, especially when the words we use have to be changed, because these define us and reality as we are accustomed to thinking of them⁷⁹. As

⁷⁷ V. Gheno, *Grammamanti*, cit., p. 42.

⁷⁸ See V. Gheno, *Chiamami così*, cit., pp. 32-35. Eloquent in this sense is the example that Vera Gheno gives in relation to the identification of the symptoms of a heart attack: "Medicine also has a male perspective. Try to answer this question off the cuff: what is one of the first signs of a heart attack? I think most of you thought: shoulder pain, chest pain. Did you know that this is a typical *male* sign? Women are more likely to experience back pain, in the lumbar region, which is why female heart attacks are often recognised later." Ibid., p. 34, original italics.

⁷⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 39-49.

Gheno points out⁸⁰, it is also a transformation in socio-cultural, and therefore linguistic, sensibility that can bring about concrete social change. This is because, as has been repeatedly stated, a language can, through its changes, help to affirm and reinforce models, thereby contributing to the construction of social expectations towards specific categories and imposing models of social behaviour – for example, on the basis of gender.

At this point, given the specific nature of the artistic object referred to in these pages, it is necessary to pay attention to another element of central importance in dramaturgy – at least in its most statistically widespread forms⁸¹: narration.

Let us start from a premise: without language there is no story, and this means that the two phenomena are closely related. Narrative, even in view of its close links with the mechanisms that underpin our process of memorising events, is a central element in our ability to relate to our surroundings and to ourselves, and its affirmation in our cognitive processes is closely related to the phase of language acquisition⁸².

Narratives, in particular, are functional tools that provide us with models for interpreting and explaining reality by placing the facts that characterise it within a sequential structure⁸³, in which time is an essential variable, through which chronological connections are established between individual events and from which formal strategies (the plot) are developed to present the events that make up the story in a more or less engaging way. The narrative structure, however, is a device closely related to chronological time, also with regard to one of its main cognitive functions: narration is not only a mechanism for ordering facts, but also a projective and imaginative one, in the sense of *anticipatory*. Through the construction of fictional stories, we activate mental simulation mechanisms that allow us to develop hypotheses. By resorting to this process, we do not merely explore in advance the possible consequences of our own and others' actions while remaining at a safe distance because we act “through intermediaries” via the characters, nor do we merely receive behavioural and strategic lessons, but rather we engage in a process that contributes to building our future in even more essential and elementary terms, since it

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

⁸¹ It is necessary to reiterate that, especially in the more experimental forms of contemporary writing, the concept of narration, as well as that of language, is often questioned, to the point that it can only be used after critical and careful consideration. In these cases, it is often more prudent to relate to such aesthetic and performative content by talking about *representation*, where this term refers to the formal dimension through which a specific content is expressed, making it perceptible. However, this content and the form used to express it can be independent of the horizon of understanding and comprehensibility and, therefore, of language as a tool for communicating an intelligible message and of narration as a device for the logical and chronological ordering of facts, aimed at making a recognisable meaning identifiable within them. It follows that a narrative is always a form of representation, but the reverse is not true, as representations of a non-narrative nature can exist.

⁸² See S. Calabrese, *Neuronarrazioni*, Milano, Editrice Bibliografica, 2020, pp. 7-10.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 60.

helps to define a range of possibilities for action, emotion and reaction within which we consider it more or less possible to project ourselves and, consequently, to think about ourselves in the medium to long term. This is why the way in which the narratives we enjoy and invent ourselves are organised influences our future and “ferries” us towards it, in close relation to the process of constant change that our neural circuits are constantly undergoing⁸⁴. When we order facts in narrative terms, as when we perform a more generic act of artistic creation, we resort to counterfactual forms of thinking, for example cognitive processes that probably developed at the dawn of human experience, through which our prehistoric ancestors sought to refine their future hunting techniques by hypothesising and identifying cause-and-effect correlations between events already experienced in the past and which could be repeated in the future. A similar approach would then also have been used in attempts to find explanations for unknown and unpredictable phenomena⁸⁵. Counterfactual thinking is therefore a particular form of thinking that presupposes an inseparable and circular relationship of mutual influence between what pertains to reality and what pertains to the realm of imaginary, allowing us to hypothesise scenarios that will have a decisive influence on how we will be predisposed to act in the future, or rather, allowing us to plan what will happen to us and, therefore, to concretely transform our reality itself⁸⁶. Once again, like language, the type of narrative we consume or produce modifies our imaginary, and our imaginary shapes our possibilities for action, which may be more or less inclusive.

Narrative is therefore, again, a *logic* with which we organise our experiences. When something or someone can be narrated, and therefore presented in a coherent and unique form, that something or someone acquires greater identity significance, that is, it seems to assume a “greater right” to exist and be recognised in its uniqueness⁸⁷ – and, consequently, a greater possibility of being protected. Existence, in fact, is the result of a mechanism of reciprocity, of a relational process, and this is because, when we exist, we do not limit ourselves to perceiving what is around us, but we expose ourselves to the gaze of others, to the perception of those who are different from us, and therefore to the possibility of being narrated by those same others⁸⁸. However, it is necessary to remember that a narrative, which presupposes an external view of the narrated object, always has an author, for instance it always expresses a partial perspective on the facts, not an absolute view of them, because the image of that

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 63. It is Stefano Calabrese himself who uses the metaphor of ferrying us towards the future produced by the narrative device.

⁸⁵ These hypotheses on the origin of counterfactual thinking are taken from *ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 23 e 33.

⁸⁷ They are narrable precisely because they are unique, unrepeatable, particular, and therefore removed from any possibility of abstraction and generalisation. “The status of narrativity belongs fully to human existence insofar as [each human being, ed.] is unique: it belongs to him as an indispensable aspect of his life, not as a guarantee of *post mortem* fame that sees posterity as the recipients of the story.” A. Cavarero, *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti. Filosofia della narrazione*, Rome, Castelvecchi, 2022, pp. 43-44.

⁸⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 28-36.

someone or something that is the subject of the narrative will always be constructed from a particular point of view⁸⁹. As such, each narrative always conveys a specific angle on the facts, or rather, it shares a portrait of its object developed from a particular perspective, which can therefore never be objective. It is important to be fully aware of this aspect because, whether we like it or not, what we express and perceive will always shape our view of things, our expectations and our plans of action.

Being narratable, or visible, is therefore not enough to be recognised and protected; the point is also *how* one is narrated, because the narrative tool is at least as two-faced as language and, obviously, can contribute to spreading and rooting misleading and biased images of reality, radically influencing how we end up positioning ourselves towards the objects of the narrative. In this sense, paying attention to how female figures have been narrated and represented throughout history and within art is essential in order to understand how the mechanisms of power that substantiate the majority position of one group at the expense of another have a decisive influence on the perpetuation of an imaginary that corroborates the inequality that gave rise to that same unbalanced representation of social roles and dynamics. In a society where power derived from the possession and monopolistic control of culture has always been the preserve of the male gender, the way in which women have been represented has long been based on a partial perspective because it is external to the subject of the narrative – the feminine, thus not only hindering the pluralism of viewpoints and the expression of feelings and experiences other than the male perspective, but also contributing to the reinforcement and dissemination of a plethora of preconceptions about women that have become ingrained in society as a whole and even in the very women they so inadequately described. In other words, the narrative of femininity has contributed to the gender dream gap.

In doing so, emotional, behavioural and social traits that are not objectively and undeniably specific to femininity, but rather to a stereotypical and therefore arbitrary image of it, have been uncritically and automatically associated with gender.

Adriana Cavarero writes:

In the long philosophical story that Oedipus inaugurates, women are notoriously placed in the position of objects, that is, they are thought of, represented, and defined from the point of view of men. As women of men and *for* men, different *from* them because men are the paradigm of the human race, women, despite being a general term, are never universal. Rather, she consists of a series of images that represent, from time to time and depending on the circumstances, *what* a woman must be in the economy of male desire: mostly a mother or a wife, and sometimes [...] a confusion of the two.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 64-65.

If it is true that “the formulas we use [to define others, ed.] are important because when we change the definition of a category of people there is an immediate difference in the way we mentally represent them”⁹¹, the same process also applies to narratives and representations. The way we represent and narrate something or someone has a decisive influence on the way we ourselves, and our interlocutors, imagine or do not imagine that element⁹².

Within art history, there are many main stereotypical models on the basis of which the female figure has been described – think, just to give a couple of examples, of the angelic lady or the *belle dame sans merci* – but they all have one thing in common: the process of objectification that women have undergone.

Objectifying an element means, first and foremost, distancing oneself from it, and therefore – in this specific circumstance – not being a woman. It is no coincidence that almost all of these portraits were created by *male* artists.

But the process of objectification does not stop there, and continues with the attribution of standardised characteristics to the figure in question, who will always be associated with traits of passivity towards the male author who created and described her: this is how women appear pure, innocent, often naive, weak, vulnerable, characterised by a goodness that easily slips into inaction, but also aesthetically perfect and devoted to frivolous pleasures, completely devoid of practical relevance and concrete purposes, of usefulness and seriousness. Or again, if women are endowed with power of action and decision, this is often ambiguously placed on the borderline between good and evil and associated with a bewitching, almost diabolical charm, which makes them more like an object of bondage desire than a woman who, just like any man, chooses to be the mistress of her own life. It is not possible to identify these representations of women as the sole cause of gender inequality, but it cannot be ignored that these paradigms have corroborated a shared imaginary – in both men and women – which in turn has reinforced the social expectations and behavioural rules on which gender-based predictions of conduct and strategies for action have become entrenched and perpetuated over time.

Even the idea of female competition is the result of a male projection and its internalisation by women themselves. Women seem compelled to compete with each other, even with particular violence and acid sadism, only if and when their position of power is unbalanced in relation to men, for example when two or more women feel they are competing with each other to win the favour of a man who has the power

⁹¹ V. Gheno, *Grammamanti*, cit., p. 47.

⁹² As already mentioned (see note *supra*), it is important to remember that, while a narrative is always a representation, the opposite is not necessarily true, because there can be non-narrative and even non-linguistic representations, meaning that the concept of gender equality extends far beyond textual or text-centred theatre alone. However, as this discussion focuses primarily on the relationship between dramaturgy and gender inclusivity, it will not dwell on this other broad type of performative and theatrical outcome, which is particularly prevalent in contemporary theatre.

to decide which of them will receive preferential treatment – and, speaking of treatment, we are once again talking about a passive role for women and an active role reserved and limited to men.

Obviously, there are countless ways of understanding the world, of relating to oneself, to otherness, but also to one's own physicality and plans for the future. However, this pluralism of possibilities, and therefore the corresponding legitimacy that each of these models similarly deserves, has not always found equal representation in the forms of artistic narration in which we grew up and were educated, thus contributing to making us feel arbitrarily "less suited" to choosing to embark on certain paths of life and action rather than others. From a narrative point of view, and with regard to gender perspective, an emblematic case is the model of narrative structure articulated around the image of the Hero, which was first concretised in Joseph Campbell⁹³, then in the iconic narrative writing manual *The Writer's Journey*, written by Christopher Vogler⁹⁴. In particular, in the latter work, which over time has become a veritable model for structuring narratives, especially commercial ones, there emerges an organisation of events developed around the characteristics and perspectives of a figure of unquestionably masculine character. The Hero, in fact.

Although the text was written with the intention of providing a model that, at least in the author's original and conscious intentions⁹⁵, disregards any definition of gender, it soon generated a significant debate on the need to offer an alternative vision, focused on traits more suited to women, or at least capable of including characterisations of events and characters that were different from the imagery proposed by Vogler and which had long been dominant in North American and European narrative composition. This gave rise to proposals such as those of Maureen Murdock⁹⁶ and Kim Hudson⁹⁷, who introduced a model that was not so much oppositional as complementary to Vogler's Hero, once again specifying, however, that while identifying figures such as the Heroine or the Virgin as prototypes, they did not intend to limit their characteristics to a female character, but rather to a function, a sensitivity, a disposition and a

⁹³ Cfr. J. Campbell, *L'eroe dai mille volti*, trans. F. Piazza, Torino, Lindau, 2016 (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1949).

⁹⁴ Cfr. C. Vogler, *Il viaggio dell'Eroe. La struttura del mito ad uso di scrittori di narrativa e cinema*, trans. J. Loreti, Roma, Dino Audino, 1999 (*The Writer's Journey. Mythic Structure for Writers*, Studio City, Michael Wiese Productions, 1992). It is also interesting that the title of the work has been translated into many languages – including Italian, the edition I am referring to here – as *The Hero's* (and not *The Writer's Journey*), reaffirming very explicitly what the actual focus of the work is: not the journey of the person who will write a narrative text, but rather the protagonist (the Hero) of that same narrative.

⁹⁵ See C. Vogler, *Prefazione* at the 2010 edition of *Il viaggio dell'Eroe (The Writer's Journey)* still published in Italy by Dino Audino.

⁹⁶ M. Murdock, *Il viaggio dell'Eroina. La risposta femminile al viaggio dell'Eroe*, trans. M. Romanelli, S. Curattola, J. Loreti, ed., Roma, Dino Audino, 2010 (*The Heroine's Journey. Woman's Quest for Wholeness*, Boulder, Shambhala Publications, 1990).

⁹⁷ K. Hudson, *La promessa della Vergine. Una drammaturgia dal punto di vista femminile, oltre il viaggio dell'Eroe*, trans. J. Loreti, Roma, Dino Audino, 2016 (*The Virgin's Promise. Writing Stories of Feminine Creative, Spiritual, and Sexual Awakening*, Studio City, Michael Wiese Productions, 2010).

behavioural and attitudinal approach that was different from the one that had been predominant until then.

The specificities of each model change considerably, expressing two different perspectives from which a narrative can be presented⁹⁸, and capturing two different paths to knowing oneself as an individual⁹⁹. For example, but remaining at the level of a rather macroscopic and almost crude oppositional differentiation, in the model proposed by Hudson¹⁰⁰, the path through which the character “learns to cope as an individual” involves an inner and emotional separation for the Virgin, while for the Hero it involves an outer and physical separation. Furthermore, the mechanisms for acquiring personal power are different, since one is a power to be (the Virgin) and the other a power to do (the Hero). The differences in the paths, and this is an interesting aspect, are to be considered the result of a different relationship that the Virgin, compared to the Hero, has with the world around her:

The Virgin’s promise speaks both to the societal expectation that she will fulfill a prescribed role, which is her burden, and her potential for being beautiful, talented, brilliant, and fabulous. [...] The Virgin exists in a Dependent World where she holds back her essential nature in order to conform to the dictates of others. She must know this poverty of personal expression, which is her Price of Conformity, in order to be driven towards fully being.¹⁰¹

For the purposes of the analysis outlined in these pages, however, it is not so important to identify the emotional, social and relational sensitivities and specificities that characterise the archetype of the Virgin (or Heroine) as opposed to that of the Hero. In fact, the most relevant aspect of the contrast lies in understanding that the archetype of the Virgin and the archetype of the Hero express, as we have seen, two different paths of individuation through which the characters in a story can acquire autonomy and power in relating to the environment in which they are placed.

This is interesting because it highlights the existence of multiple ways in which it is possible to interpret and experience everyday life and, therefore, to manage and organise what we consider plausible within it. In other words, there are different logics for composing an imaginary world.

Developing analyses that highlight interpretative and action patterns that differ from those that have been dominant until now undoubtedly provides a central stimulus for the expansion of the imaginary and the consequent creation of an inclusive context, but also invites a further step, namely overcoming the risk of a perspective in which the masculine and the feminine are considered two opposite, albeit complementary, poles which, if sclerotised, increase the risk of falling back into a dichotomous and

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 138.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 139.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 136. Original text, not my translation. However, the page references are taken from the Italian edition.

Manichean interpretation that fails to identify the multitude of nuances that can be found in between. Two perspectives are certainly better than one, but the point now is not to create the conditions for a sterile and unproductive ideological opposition between two fronts that end up becoming mutually exclusive: it is necessary to remember that, both in artistic representation and in everyday life, there is also the possibility of dynamic interaction between them, for instance the construction of new possibilities for configuration. One of the most interesting aspects of this debate on narrative models based on gender lies in the fact that, since there are multiple ways to become individuals, to know oneself and to find one's place in the world¹⁰², the presence of multiple archetypes that cover the range of plausible configurations in the most detailed and comprehensive way possible allows us, first and foremost, to feel included, legitimate and possible, and thus to grasp and develop other possibilities for action and thought, other behavioural patterns that differ from the dominant ones, and other interpretative paths than those of the majority. In other words, it allows us to modify our perceptual disposition, our imaginary, expanding the patterns of action, choice, and therefore identity that we consider possible and, thus, to impact on the action itself, an action and an imaginary that cannot fail to reverberate on a political level, in the intersubjective, interpersonal, collective, and shared sense. In other words, proposing a model that is different (perhaps complementary, in some cases alternative) to the majority model is a significant process, first and foremost because it moves in the direction of pluralism, suggesting the existence of other visions, other experiential experiences and other ways of relating to oneself and to the context which, even if they do not correspond to the most widespread, established and "powerful" form of action, are nevertheless to be considered fully legitimate. This contribution is decisive because it once again calls into question the concept of "minor" in the broadest sense borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari¹⁰³, understood as the element capable of challenging the majority model from within, causing it to vibrate until it reveals the existence of the alternative, of another perspective from which to live, to experience and to interpret reality.

Based on how women have been predominantly portrayed over time, women often struggle to think of themselves, to *imagine themselves*, and to be imagined by men as having real decision-making power, appearing, if anything, to be legitimised only to hold the power to ingratiate themselves with a man, whose actions and benevolence they will then be subject to.

However, this is a delicate subject and must be treated with particular caution. What we want to emphasise, in fact, is not so much the indiscriminate "responsibility" or "fault" of men for the disadvantaged condition of women, and not only because – as we women know very well, but let us say

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁰³ See *supra*.

it! – “not all men” are like that. The aim here is rather to reiterate the pervasive and hidden power that the ways of narrating and describing a specific social category have on the cultural way of understanding it and understanding ourselves, to the point of dismantling our rights, our possibilities and, once again, what we feel entitled to dream of.

Provided that it is still necessary to find a function for it in order to legitimise it, art demonstrates its disruptive role: it has the power to insinuate itself into automatic ways of thinking in order to dismantle them and then recompose them on the basis of other assumptions, in the light of a new and “minor” perspective, capable of changing even the categorical and cognitive substrates on which our daily actions and relationships are based.

The language we use, or the language used in the contexts in which we live, as well as the narrative strategies we employ, therefore have a visceral impact on our imaginative abilities, influencing not only our memory of the past and our interpretation of the present, but also the hypotheses that each of us considers plausible and feasible for our own and others’ futures¹⁰⁴. As has already been widely reiterated, it is essential for human beings to hypothesise realities, or configurations of reality, and this process is crucial in order to begin to realise them, because without imaginary – that is, without the ability to envision – the alternative, that alternative simply does not exist.

It is impossible to disregard the limitations and partiality of our forms of expression, every linguistic and narrative choice always carries with it bias and cognitive constraints, but this does not mean that the artistic experience – or, more generally, the discursive and dialogical experience – based on it will be doomed to failure and prejudicial error, because the starting point is, rather, a horizon of awareness. Knowing that language and our narrative strategies influence our perceptions of the world and, therefore, our behavioural choices, should in fact make us more aware, and therefore more critically attentive, to the logic we choose to adopt when we express ourselves. The representations we compose, the narrative dynamics we use, the words we select, the linguistic-syntactic structures we use to connect them – especially if language and representation are the main tools in which our art and our profession manifest themselves – must always be as thoughtful, meditated and weighed up as possible. In this way, not only will we reduce the risk of conveying misleading views of the world, but we will also increase the chances of transforming the erroneous perspectives currently in force, thus contributing to their dismantling.

This process of linguistic-cognitive training is also positively influenced by the inclusiveness in terms of artistic expression of so-called minorities, for instance, those social categories which, although not necessarily smaller in number than the majority, are nevertheless disadvantaged and invisible from both

¹⁰⁴ V. Gheno, *Grammamanti*, cit., p. 12.

a social and political point of view and which, as a result, face greater obstacles in making their voices heard. Given the central role that artistic expression plays in the construction of the collective imaginary, it is not only important that those who create art are sensitive to the ways in which they refer linguistically to and narrate the complexity of everyday life, but it is also crucial that the social groups that contribute to the very complexity and diversity of our world have the right to express themselves and their specificities, because they are undoubtedly better qualified to express how they wish to be represented in the eyes of others¹⁰⁵. In these terms, the horizons of representation and representation reconnect with each other, reaffirming the urgency of a pluralism of visions on the stages – real and metaphorical – of our daily lives.

It is therefore only through self-critical consideration of the content and forms we use to express ourselves and by safeguarding expressive pluralism that we can reaffirm the political and cognitive relevance of a minor vision, enabling it to progressively dismantle those gender gaps, first and foremost the *gender* dream gap, which every day constrain and limit our choices and actions.

Section 4 – Fabulamundi’s work

On the basis of the theoretical assumptions outlined above, we can now analyse more specifically the trends and practical solutions that shape the Fabulamundi community’s commitment to building a dramaturgical and scenic environment that is as inclusive as possible, with particular attention to gender issues.

The following analysis is organised along two interconnected lines. The first (Section 4.1) examines quantitative data that contribute to safeguarding gender equality and diversifying perspectives within Fabulamundi’s training and creative activities. Particular attention is given to the training of playwrights in the network, as well as of young and aspiring theatre authors. These activities are implemented through a wide range of educational initiatives: writing workshops designed and promoted by each partner, together with projects such as *Playground for New Voices*, aimed more specifically at supporting, developing, and refining theatrical texts already in progress.

The second line of analysis (Section 4.2) shifts the focus to the methodological approaches and perspectives adopted during the 2023-2025 programme by Fabulamundi, its partners, collaborators, and authors. Here the concern is to identify writing strategies for the stage that can influence not only the content but also the *logic* of representation, shaping the imaginaries produced by theatrical practice. This

¹⁰⁵ See V. Gheno, *Chiamami così*, cit., pp. 71-85.

process works first on the sensitivity of the authors themselves and then on the attitudes and dispositions of their audiences.

4.1 Tracking gender balance in the *New Voices* Community: from general frameworks to specific trends in the 2023–2025 Fabulamundi edition

From a structural perspective – numerical, organisational, and operational – the next section focuses on the gender composition of the Fabulamundi community and the organisation of its training activities. These activities are directed both toward the nineteen playwrights directly involved in the network and toward the young authors who participated in educational initiatives led by those playwrights. Particular attention is given to the pedagogical approach adopted, which plays a crucial role in fostering an inclusive theatrical environment – and, by extension, an inclusive social one.

Attention will then be paid to how the authors themselves in the network have been trained over the three years, so that they can refine their professional and technical awareness of gender equality.

Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe is a European network, funded by Creative Europe, which currently involves fifteen different European countries through a dense network of local partners. Building on extensive international experience that began in 2007 with an intense exchange between playwrights and their creative practices in Italy and France, Fabulamundi's activities soon expanded to involve an increasing number of international institutions and artists, quickly becoming a true reference point for the development and innovation of contemporary playwriting at the European level.

The most recent edition of the project, *New Voices* (2023–2025), is driven by the desire to engage new generations and to bring their multiple voices and perspectives into the practice and culture of playwriting, making them active participants in contemporary dramaturgy. To involve more than four hundred young people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds – and with varying levels of experience and knowledge of stage practice – *Fabulamundi New Voices* places pedagogy at the heart of its work. It aims to identify and refine the most effective strategies for creating an inclusive, dynamic, and up-to-date training environment, one that is sensitive to the main challenges facing younger generations and their future, including gender equality, sustainability, and digitalisation.

The project focuses not only on training future generations of playwrights but also on strengthening its own educational expertise and capacity to raise awareness among tomorrow's authors. This begins with the training of its core members – above all, the playwrights whose work it supports – as well as through translation and intercultural exchange of texts, and extends to the local partners that make up the network.

The ambition is to actively foster an international community of young playwrights through a network of training opportunities: short- and long-term workshops, online mentoring and educational programs, and international exchanges that bring together different playwriting skills and professional expertise. These activities often include mobility experiences abroad and public presentations of the texts produced.

Supporting young authors does not only mean offering them access to new and updated techniques of playwriting. It also means enabling them to encounter a vibrant and dynamic professional community within which they can refine their ideas and develop their texts. In this process, they engage with established theatre professionals from diverse fields, with translators specializing in the intercultural and interlinguistic adaptation of dramatic texts, and with a rich international panorama of contemporary theatre.

At the heart of the artistic, creative and educational activities of the 2023-2025 edition of the project are nineteen established playwrights from nine different European countries and at least as many cultural and experiential backgrounds:

They are not passive beneficiaries, but active co-creators. Together they form the FAB Community, a vibrant, multilingual constellation of artists working across cultural and disciplinary boundaries. Their practice is not solitary, but relational. Through a twinned mobility scheme, each playwright is paired with a counterpart from another country, creating a dynamic of mentorship, exchange, and mutual support. This artistic twinning challenges the image of the solitary playwright and replaces it with a vision of shared authorship and collaborative growth.¹⁰⁶

The training programme adopts a two-tier methodology. The first tier directly involves the nineteen playwrights and thirteen network partners, who participate in a series of theoretical and practical meetings – both peer-to-peer and with industry specialists – designed to raise their awareness of the project’s key issues.

The second tier consists of a broader work plan in which the playwrights themselves, both as tutors and as international “twinned playwrights,” lead training workshops with young authors. In this way, they contribute directly to developing the writing skills of the next generation of theatre makers. This second area of action is structured around two main types of activity.

The first consists of *creative workshops*, where young authors – regardless of their previous training – are introduced to stage-writing techniques. These often culminate in the production of texts that are presented through public readings or stage performances. The second consists of *Playground for New*

¹⁰⁶ C. Di Giacomo, R. Scaglione, *Fabulamundi New Voices: A Blueprint for Collaborative Playwriting in Europe*, in AA. VV. *Playwriting Practices in Theatre. A Casebook*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2025, p. 12.

Voices, workshops focused on testing and refining pre-existing scripts written by young playwrights. Here, participants undergo an intensive process of revision, working closely with established professionals from different specializations – playwrights, directors, actors, translators – to achieve a more defined outcome for their texts. This work is accompanied by high-quality translation and enriched through continuous dialogue with artists active on the international scene.

What gradually emerges is a network of skills, exchanges, mutual care, and attentive listening – together with professional growth and training – capable of crossing cultural, linguistic, and national boundaries, fully aligned with the culture of the European Union and its principles of development.

The impact of this model is twofold. On one hand, the 19 playwrights serve as mentors for younger participants – students, emerging artists, and theatre lovers – who join the programme in each country. On the other hand, they are mentored themselves by international experts through a tailored professional development programme. This dual movement – of giving and receiving – creates a virtuous circle of knowledge, generosity, and care.

The educational component of New Voices goes beyond craft. It addresses urgent cultural concerns: gender equality, inclusiveness, environmental sustainability, and digitisation. These are not side topics – they are integral to the training. By engaging with them directly, Fabulamundi offers its community not only artistic tools but also ethical frameworks. In this way, it models a holistic vision for the development of creative professionals.

[...]

What makes New Voices more than just another programme is its belief in continuity. The playwrights involved are not seen as temporary participants, but as future pillars of a larger European dramaturgical infrastructure. Many have become ambassadors of the project's ethos, integrating the Fabulamundi experience into their professional journeys. For them, this isn't a detour – it's a direction.

In this way, Fabulamundi New Voices doesn't just mark a new chapter – it offers a new paradigm. It provides a replicable model for institutions and networks looking to empower emerging artists while staying grounded in community, inclusion, and cross-border exchange.¹⁰⁷

To better understand the scope of Fabulamundi's training activities – particularly in terms of gender inclusivity – it is important to examine some numerical¹⁰⁸ data¹⁰⁹.

Among the nineteen playwrights directly involved in the network (Figure 1), who serve as the main tutors for training activities with younger authors, 68.4% are women and 31.6% are men. Across all training

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁸ The percentages shown below, on which the analysis was based, were calculated in light of the data on participation in workshops and Playgrounds available on 29/08/2025, when reporting on the activities carried out by the partners was 93,02% complete. All values were defined on the basis of self-attributed gender by the participants involved. The graphs and tables in Section 6 - Appendix: data set refer to the numbering of the figures in the text.

¹⁰⁹ See Section 6 - Appendix: data set.

activities carried out in the 2023-2025 period – whether aimed at playwrights, partners, or young authors – 64.06% of participants were predominantly women, 21.8% were predominantly men, and 14.06% had equal numbers of women and men (Figure 2).

Looking at the first level of training, which addressed the project’s key themes and involved both peer-to-peer interventions and expert-led meetings, women consistently outnumbered men. This was true for courses dedicated solely to playwrights (Figure 3), activities for partners (Figure 4), and sessions involving both groups (Figure 5).

At the second level of training, which targeted young playwrights (Figure 6), 58.9% of activities had predominantly female participants, 25% predominantly male, and 16.1% equally balanced. A distinction must be made here between workshops and *Playgrounds*.

In the workshops led by network playwrights (Figure 7), 60.4% had more female participants, 22.9% more male participants, and 16.7% were balanced. Each workshop involved both a local playwright (from the host country) and a “twinned” playwright (from another country in the network). These twinned collaborations often facilitated international mobility, giving participants the opportunity to spend time abroad. This structure not only diversified methodological approaches but also contributed to gender representation. Indeed, among the playwrights leading workshops (Figure 8), women outnumbered men in 55.56% of cases; men outnumbered women in only 4.76%; and the numbers were equal in 39.68%. Looking more closely (Figure 9), 41.27% of workshops were led exclusively by women, 4.76% exclusively by men, and 53.97% by mixed-gender teams. The data shows a clear asymmetry: workshops with a male majority were led only by men, while those with a female majority often included men as well, though in a minority role.

Turning to the Playground for New Voices, participation – considering both emerging playwrights and the professionals supporting them – was predominantly female in 50% of cases, predominantly male in 37.5%, and balanced in 12.5%. Among the emerging playwrights themselves (Figure 11), 62.5% were women and 37.5% men.

Overall, the data demonstrates that at every level of training within *New Voices*, women were not only strongly represented but often the majority – whether as trainers or participants. Activities with balanced gender participation were also significant, while male-dominated activities were rare and often linked to specific themes (such as the first part of the workshop on artificial intelligence in playwriting). Cases where the team of trainers consisted exclusively of men were even rarer.

In numerical terms, therefore, *Fabulamundi New Voices 2023-2025* shows a consistent focus on women’s inclusivity across all training levels. This emphasis is significant because, as the following section will show¹¹⁰, it impacts both representation on stage and the wider circulation of female-authored texts and

¹¹⁰ See Section 5 – Conclusions.

imaginaries – an important corrective in an artistic and social context still shaped largely by male perspectives and, in some instances, by openly sexist dynamics.

4.2 From practice to vision: gender-focused initiatives in *New Voices 2023–2025*, from the Amleta Test to the Speculative Fabulations

Once the structure of the interventions and the project's objectives are defined, the question becomes: how can tangible results be achieved? In other words, how can we move from a vision to a mission, from awareness to practice?

The distinctive feature of Fabulamundi's work over the years has been its unique focus on playwriting, particularly on dramaturgy, within the performative horizon of the present. Through close collaboration with active authors, the network has aimed to establish a culture of contemporary dramaturgy that not only responds to the present but also prepares and raises awareness among the playwrights of the future.

The transition from aspiration to practice takes place precisely here, in the dramaturgical text. The text is understood not only as a script but also as a *landscape*¹¹¹ – a cultural panorama capable of structuring and shaping the imaginary on which daily awareness and action are based. In this way, dramaturgy extends beyond the stage, and theatricality becomes, first and foremost, a tool for building an ethical and political practice.

Fabulamundi's commitment to creating an inclusive dramaturgical and theatrical space, with particular attention to gender equality, predates the 2023-2025 edition.

A milestone in this work was reached in 2021 with the start of a collaboration with Amleta, "a social promotion association whose aim is to combat gender inequality and violence in the entertainment world"¹¹². Founded by twenty-eight actresses from across Italy, Amleta defines itself as "an intersectional feminist collective that shines a spotlight on the presence of women in the world of entertainment and the representation of women in classical and contemporary drama, and is a vigilant and constant observatory for combating violence and harassment in the workplace"¹¹³.

¹¹¹ V. De Simone, *Listening to the Future*, cit., p. 104: "A play is not just a script; it's a landscape".

¹¹² <https://www.amleta.org/chi-siamo/>, last access 02/09/2025.

¹¹³ Ibid.

The partnership between Fabulamundi and Amleta centres on the *Amleta Test*, a dramaturgical analysis tool inspired by the well-known Bechdel Test¹¹⁴. The *Amleta Test* aims to serve as “an indicator that records the values that allow a text to overcome the narrative clichés that have become culturally ingrained in our imaginary”¹¹⁵, ensuring a representation of women that is “not only a question of presence, but above all of languages and narratives free of stereotypes”¹¹⁶. What makes this tool significant is its attention to the mutual influence between text (or artistic product) and collective imaginary. Representation is not limited to formal or numerical aspects; it shapes everyday life by contributing to changes in behaviour. In this sense, the artistic outcome becomes a catalyst for social transformation, making the theatrical horizon an active force in reconfiguring our cultural practices.

The Amleta Test reinforces two key principles already central to Fabulamundi’s objectives. First, it reminds us that representation evolves not only through narrative construction but also through the languages employed, the relationships among characters, and the structural choices that organise the portrayal of the feminine. These elements can be more or less complex, more or less multifaceted, and thus more or less capable of expanding our imaginative possibilities and legitimising those who are different from us. Second, it underscores the importance of an intersectional approach – an axis around which the 2023-2025 training and awareness-raising activities for Fabulamundi’s authors and partners have been developed. It is not enough to address a single factor of inequality. To be effective, attention must also be paid to how different forms of discrimination intersect, compounding risks and limiting equal access to resources for specific social groups.

Fabulamundi then applied the Amleta Test to numerous plays already in the archive, selected at random from among the available dramas, provided that they met two main criteria: at least two plays had to be analysed for each country in the network and, among these, at least one had to have been written by a female author and at least one by a male author. Following this validation, the Test was further refined through intensive dialogue with the Amleta Association, to reduce as much as possible the margin for misunderstanding the parameters evaluated and the results produced. Once this initial refinement phase was complete, the tool was translated into English and, again by Fabulamundi, distributed to the network’s partners and authors so that they could integrate it into their own research and writing activities.

Analysed by the members of the network, the Test proved to be a useful tool, especially in the *writing* phase, due to its ability to stimulate authors to reflect on alternative possibilities in terms of the

¹¹⁴ The Bechdel Test, named after cartoonist Alison Bechdel, aims to evaluate the role of female characters in film and television scripts and is based on the presence, within the text, of at least two female characters who talk to each other about topics not related to male characters or figures.

¹¹⁵ <https://www.amleta.org/test-amleta/>, last access 02/09/2025.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

presentation of characters and their relationships. However, it seems to raise some concerns as a means of verifying and monitoring already written texts, primarily due to the margin of arbitrariness in the evaluation that it still seems to present. The Amleta Test, in particular, is therefore an interesting stimulus to help playwrights compose or adapt texts in such a way as to include as many possible configurations as possible in the composition of the dramaturgy, in the definition of its characters, as well as in the structuring of their relationships, primarily thanks to its ability to raise issues concerning power relations and, even more so, the subtle and unconscious ways in which they manifest themselves, often impacting the texts and, therefore, the imagery represented, far beyond the will and awareness of those who invented and wrote those same textual products.

The application of the Amleta Test – which has sparked lively debate among network members about its scope and applicability – has enabled Fabulamundi to cultivate greater sensitivity in its work, with particular attention to the key themes of the 2023-2025 edition. If the central question posed by the Test is how to monitor, during the composition phase, both the inclusiveness of the texts produced and the imaginaries they convey, then the next step is to identify a strategy that can translate this awareness into practice – that is, into a transmissible disposition.

The focus of the activity now shifts to the importance attributed to *pedagogy*, or rather to the strategies to be adopted in the training of new playwrights. In this context, in particular, there is an urgent need to pay attention to a *methodological* dimension: on what assumptions should workshops and activities for the development of dramatic texts aimed at new generations of playwrights be based? How can we stimulate their imaginary and their specific relational and expressive modes in such a way as to multiply the possibilities for inclusion, narration and active listening in their writing practices?

The urgency of pedagogical sensitivity in the process of conveying writing techniques is a trait shared by all the authors in the network in defining the approaches that can be used during the workshops. Understood in this way, the commitment to establishing a dramaturgical community capable of dynamically connecting the present and the future is thus enriched by an awareness oriented primarily towards *responsibility* and animated by an intense self-critical analysis:

What do we rely on when we transmit knowledge? Who passes on what? To whom? Where? To what end? How do our perspective and personal identifications affect what and how we transmit? It's as an artist and practitioner that I transmit – what exactly? Undoubtedly, experience, but also a taste for questioning and wandering, which has enabled me to explore the rules and possibilities of the dramatic form in complete freedom.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ N. Fillion, *What Do We Rely on When We Transmit Knowledge?*, in AA. VV., *Playwriting Practices in Theatre. A Casebook*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2025, p. 112.

Recognising in the writing of new generations a space capable of creating and preparing new imaginaries of inclusiveness means, first of all, creating educational contexts that are respectful and welcoming. Such contexts must embrace the multiplicity of scenarios, the breadth of sensibilities, and the complexity of experiences and identities that emerge from our shared humanity – a dynamism that reaches its most intense and fragile expression during adolescence and youth.

Listening without judgement, granting freedom of expression, paying attention to individual emotional experiences, protecting personal vulnerabilities, and valuing the uniqueness of each participant are the essential foundations of this approach. These practices constitute the first indispensable building block for an educational environment that sees writing the future as a central contribution to social change – beginning with the care of our imaginaries and, therefore, of the horizons of possibility we deem legitimate and attainable, both as individuals and as members of a wider, interconnected community. Based on these assumptions, the techniques and methodologies used in the workshops become indispensable strategies for approaching a

key concept when working with young people encountering playwriting for the first time: empowerment. The awareness of the possibilities each person already has within themselves, which can be organised and shaped into theatrical expression.

The benefits of this empowerment can go beyond dramaturgical training and become part of vital learning – and that is something especially beautiful to keep in mind when talking about something as immeasurable as “learning to write.”¹¹⁸

Empowerment is a key issue in gender inclusivity, once again emphasising the continuity that exists between the pedagogical approach used in relating to the creativity of the younger generations, the worldview that can unfold within them, and the possibilities for equality and inclusivity that this perspective makes possible in the near future.

Taking part in the workshops is, above all, an opportunity for intense dialogue with professionals from diverse environments, specialisations, sensibilities, and backgrounds. At the same time, each participant develops their own path through a training strategy that deliberately integrates multiple perspectives on art and cultural experience. This is ensured by the co-presence of at least two playwrights – one of whom always comes from another country – who accompany young people on a journey of intersubjective awareness, an essential feature of playwriting practice.

¹¹⁸ O. Morales I Pujolar, *Alone Together, So Much Shared: Empowering Inexperienced Playwrights*, in AA. VV., *Playwriting Practices in Theatre. A Casebook*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2025, pp. 21-22.

Equally important is the experience of belonging to a community, a group in which everyone's contribution is indispensable. In the theatrical context, the enhancement of each person's specificities becomes a strength and the basis for a new, equal, and inclusive organisation of the social and professional relationships that sustain it.

Through the pedagogical strategies adopted – and beginning with the structure of the experts who lead the training – playwriting develops within a process that multiplies plausible points of view and safeguards the legitimacy of polyphony. This polyphony is recognized both as a collective phenomenon and in the specificity of each voice and vision involved. In this way, the workshops create an environment conducive to comparison, exchange, mutual growth, and inclusive debate.

The feedback¹¹⁹ gathered from workshop participants frequently confirmed the intentions underlying the methodological structure of the training activities, reiterating the close and reciprocal connection between the space of the imaginary and the horizon of reality:

“I learned about how to cooperate in bigger group of people with different kinds of approaches.”

“The atmosphere in the workshop was very pleasant, giving freedom to each participant to follow what they need the most and not feeling judged.”

“I felt very safe of sharing my thought and writing which is one of the most important things in a workshop, for me.”

“I really enjoyed the opportunity to see and experience the clash of different views, visions and opinions. It was really valuable for me to see how one story can be perceived differently depending on each person's background, experience or empathy.”

“There was a French woman, an Indian woman, a Mexican woman, an Italian woman, a Spanish woman... It's almost a joke. But our work together, there, for a week, was no joke. It was a game, magical and serious at the same time, where the words were our instruments and the board the platform for our dreams.”

“I really appreciated the attention that [the tutors, ed.] gave to each of us, commenting each work very precisely and being very opened to each question. Also I liked the horizontality of the lab: the images and the development would always start from the group, and for me this was very fertile in order to open our creativity.”

“The most valuable aspect of the exchange was for me the generosity that I found in the conductors and the other participants. It was all about a method – or the encountering of two methods – and about being always open and present to the real time. I didn't feel it as a lesson, it was instead something more like a gym, like a training, and I think that's very good because I will be always take it with me in next dramaturgy experiences.”

“I liked very much to work with someone else and I think this kind of context is very important for shy people like me who need an impulse to interact with new people and to feel safe at the same time, but also for

¹¹⁹ All feedback provided by workshop participants was collected anonymously at the end of the activities, using specific questionnaires prepared by Fabulamundi based on the project deliverables.

playwrights in general because of this vulnerable and beautiful side of writing for the stage which supposed more direct interaction with the others and their stories than other type of texts.”

“I also felt truly heard. The atmosphere was warm and honest, and I felt safe to share real stories – sometimes painful, but deeply important.”

“Teamwork is important as it is easier to have multiple point of views, and several brains are better than one!”

“I’ll remember the moments when we shared things we wouldn’t normally say out loud. I learned that it’s okay to speak up and be vulnerable, and that every story matters. The workshop helped me see that expressing emotions isn’t a weakness, it’s actually a strength.”¹²⁰

The importance of mutual listening and non-judgmental discussion of perspectives different from one’s own emerged with particular force in the workshops held across diverse socio-economic and cultural contexts. In some cases, these activities reached areas marked by high levels of marginalisation and inequality, where they played a decisive role in strengthening empowerment. Here, empowerment was understood as a practice that finds expression through expanded access to culture and through opportunities for both individual and collective artistic expression.

The creative process thus becomes a space for inclusion. Engaging younger generations – particularly those from disadvantaged socio-cultural contexts – enriches the themes and perspectives explored through writing. This exchange fosters mutual growth through a twofold broadening of horizons. On one side, playwrights help young authors to develop their expressive potential. On the other, young people challenge professional writers by introducing new themes, forms, and structures. In this way, a training environment emerges that expands the creative and imaginative scope of writing, extending outward to engage a broader and more complex social and community ecosystem.

Training in playwriting thus becomes an indispensable path toward social inclusiveness. The process and intersubjective context of theatrical creation provide a space for exchange, comparison, and expression that broadens perspectives while also challenging customary narratives and dominant strategies for interpreting reality. In doing so, it activates a process capable of crossing social and systemic boundaries – boundaries that often reinforce the marginalisation of groups already in minority positions.

The result is therefore an artistic practice of *political* relevance, which lays the foundations for the development of social inclusiveness starting precisely from the dynamics of artistic construction and scene composition.

Through these practices, we ensure our work resonates with young participants in order to transform the creative process itself into a model for a more inclusive society.

¹²⁰ From feedback gathered from workshop participants.

Artists play a unique role in this endeavour by providing platforms for historically marginalised or silenced voices, enabling a new generation from diverse backgrounds and social conditions to amplify their stories and challenge prevailing narratives in the creative process.

This approach offers new potentiality for contemporary dramaturgy to address privilege and political responsibility.

Through collaborative projects, we aim to nurture a sense of empowerment through self-expression and agency among young people, encouraging them to reclaim their identities and histories.¹²¹

The relevance of the pedagogical approach in training young playwrights does not lie simply in including inclusivity as one of the workshop themes. Rather, it depends on the direction, structure, and methodology of the training itself. These are what enable a constructive engagement with gender equality and inclusivity, fostering a structural transformation – above all in the realm of imaginary, imagination and empathetic openness to others – that signals genuine change in writing practices.

It is therefore in this context that testimonies such as the following become relevant:

The theme of my monologue was: “how to deal with patriarchy as a man”. From a male point of view. All the troubles it brings with it.

The formal approach was contemporary, spoken language.¹²²

In fact, we are not only dealing with the issue of patriarchy here, we are *complexifying* the view of patriarchy, and this is because, in this case, it is a man who is talking about it, and from a similarly – and therefore self-reflective – male point of view.

Based on these assumptions, training activities can be conceived as spaces that welcome diversity and sensitivity, while also embracing one’s own and others’ weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Such spaces create decisive opportunities to enrich writing – and, more importantly, the imaginaries that theatre is capable of producing.

Listening to a man speak critically about patriarchy has a different impact, particularly on those resistant to the concept, than when the issue is addressed in more familiar ways. Yet it is not simply the *theme* itself that generates change, but the *perspective* from which the theme is explored. A shifted perspective opens new scenarios, makes an issue multifaceted and shared, and prevents it from being confined to the concerns of a single, limited social group. In this way, the problem becomes everyone’s problem: everyone bears responsibility, everyone is affected, and everyone is called to respond.

¹²¹ P. Di Matteo, *Dramaturgy as Protocols of Interaction*, in AA. VV. *Fabulamundi New Voices: Diversifying Theatre. A Casebook*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2025, pp. 17-18.

¹²² From feedback gathered from workshop participants.

What makes the difference is not only male dramaturgy on patriarchy approached critically and self-reflectively, but also dramaturgy written by women and by those who do not identify with a binary gender division. What matters is that these works are driven by the capacity to break free from imaginative automatisms – from the predetermined ruts of what has already been written, practised, seen, or assumed.

What kind of pedagogy, then? What kind of writing?

Multiple.

Or, better still, *multipliers*.

If the key to transforming action is to transform the imaginary, then the way to transform the imaginary is to multiply points of view, to increase the possibility of their coexistence, of mutually enriching coexistence between what is intrinsically different, where being different is a fundamental trait of everything that is human. The imaginary transforms and evolves by increasing the probability of the unexpected and legitimising its existence, as well as weakness, cracks, fissures, and *trouble*.

The concept of “trouble” referred to here is crucial and refers in particular to the meaning used by Donna J. Haraway and carefully analysed in the Italian translation of *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* by Claudia Durastanti and Clara Ciccioni, who write in the first note of the text:

In English, the word *trouble* differs from *problem* in that it indicates a state of crisis, confusion and disorder, in which the need to find a solution is not immediate. *Trouble* has more open boundaries than *problem*, which already contains within itself the need to be solved, perhaps according to scientific principles.¹²³

The *trouble* should therefore be understood “not as a question to be solved by applying already known formulas, not as the activation of responses that are already known”¹²⁴, but rather as something related to the Latin etymology of the word *problem*, thus recovering “a dimension of challenge, of something that stands before us and must be faced, even with a sense of militancy that echoes throughout Haraway’s book. Perhaps the open component of disorder is lost, but an active way of dealing with it is gained”¹²⁵.

¹²³ C. Durastanti, C. Ciccioni, in D. Haraway, *Chthulucene. Sopravvivere su un pianeta infetto*, trans. C. Durastanti, C. Ciccioni, Roma, NERO, 2019, (*Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016), p.197, note 1.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid. When the editors talk about components of the term that risk being lost, while retaining others, they are obviously referring to the translation choices they make in the Italian version, while at the same time suggesting interesting reflections on how Haraway’s text should be understood.

Following Haraway's reasoning, as human beings, or more broadly, as living beings, we are constantly exposed to *trouble*: we can choose to deal with it individually, atomically, conflictually, or we can question the usual ways we think, plan, imagine the future and decide to collectively reorganise, in a shared form, our relationships, so as to create unexpected forms of kinship that go beyond social ties and blood relations, as well as the usual and automatic gender divisions of roles and expectations, thus establishing relationships of mutual care and mutual aid based on relationships in which the usual and arbitrary socio-cultural and community boundaries are broken down. If our categorical horizon opens up to include the other – and, above all, the other “as a woman”¹²⁶ – through a practice that is as concretely empathetic as it is imaginatively inclusive of the possibility and alternative horizon to what we have always considered normal, the greater the chances of developing dynamic and flexible strategies for managing problems, the unexpected, and individual and collective weakness.

Our relationships, however, are largely based on our imaginative capacity, on what we believe to be possible. The future, like the present and the past, is made up of relationships, as well as the quality and modalities that characterise them. It is no coincidence that many of the pedagogical methodologies adopted in Fabulamundi workshops conform, more or less consciously and more or less explicitly, to the fundamentals of the thinking of Donna Haraway, a feminist biologist and zoologist who has devoted herself to the study of the relationship between gender identity and science, paying particular attention to the concept of *fabulation*.

On the basis of these assumptions, resorting to a socially inclusive horizon means first and foremost seeking new paths for thought, triggering a mechanism of creativity in the face of everyday challenges, a mechanism driven primarily by those who wish to remain in touch with the problem and, at the same time, collaboratively take action accordingly.

The self-perpetuating circle from which this reflection started now returns to reaffirm its relevance, but this time in terms of a *virtuous circle*: creating a socially inclusive horizon, especially in terms of gender inclusivity, is only possible by imagining our future differently, broadening the range of possibilities, careers, and legitimacy that we usually consider possible. Creating a socially inclusive horizon makes it possible to establish new intersubjective bonds and new configurations of shared living. Through these, we can face the challenges of everyday life constructively, without falling into polarisation. Otherwise, such challenges risk exacerbating existing inequalities and reinforcing the hostilities that already dominate any social horizon confronted with the difficulties of existence. While this reflection may seem abstract and disconnected from the techniques of dramatic composition, the effect is only apparent. To understand the connection with them, and thus identify the close link between artistic creation and social

¹²⁶ The reference is to the subtitle of the most recent Italian edition of L. Irigaray, *Speculum. De l'autre femme*, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1974, translated into Italian as “dell'altro *in quanto* donna”, which means “the other *as a woman*”, my italic (L. Irigaray, *Speculum. Dell'altro in quanto donna*, trans. by L. Muraro, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2017).

inclusiveness through the role played by the imaginary, it is essential to refer to the concept of *Fabulative Speculations* introduced by Haraway herself. Fabulative Speculations are first and foremost adventures of ideas¹²⁷, imaginative exercises which, both in a naturalistic context and in a narrative and artistic environment, have progressively acquired relevance in the hypothetical mechanisms through which alternative scenarios to the usual ones can be conceived, so as to make behavioural paths and decision-making strategies other than the usual ones plausible, and thus to open up, as a consequence, innovative logical configurations from which our actions can be conceived, structured and practised. As Haraway herself points out, Fabulative Speculations are “patternings, risky comakings”¹²⁸ – which is to say “practices of modelling”¹²⁹, for instance practices of creative thinking which, by breaking down the usual criteria on which we rely to organise our behavioural hypotheses, confront us with other ways – previously unthought of, or *unimaginable* – through which our actions, reactions and relationships can be structured, forming the basis of a process of effective, and therefore practical and practicable, creation of change.

In other words, by practising imaginative training that cognitively stimulates our brain to think on the basis of criteria that are apparently impractical or even illogical, our mind will develop creative, concrete and completely innovative expedients, through which it will be possible not only to invent fantastic scenarios in which to set surreal stories but also, and this is the most interesting aspect of Haraway's work, to find solutions to concrete and real problems in our daily lives.

Through a reflection developed from a biological perspective, Haraway consequently proposes a creative exercise of vital importance in the process of constructing new imaginaries which, through dramaturgical writing, can be affirmed and, consequently, placed at the foundation of a new daily course of action: if thinking outside the usual – for instance, habitual and automatic – human logical criteria allows us to understand modes of interspecies survival practised, for example, by the organisms that make up the coral reef, in the same way, human beings themselves, especially in view of the creativity that undeniably identifies them as a species, can be invited to hypothesise new solutions to those they usually resort to. Based on these assumptions, therefore, the imaginative exercise proposed by Donna Haraway becomes an element of decisive importance within artistic practice, making it the basis for the mechanisms of composition of new imaginative possibilities on the basis of which to structure our daily lives in a direction of greater social inclusiveness.

¹²⁷ D. Haraway, *Chthulucene*, cit., p. 27. The concept of ‘adventures of ideas’ is introduced in Haraway's work starting from the title of a book by Alfred North Whitehead, see A. N. Whitehead, *The Adventures of Ideas*, New York, Macmillan, 1933.

¹²⁸ D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, cit., p. 14.

¹²⁹ D. Haraway, *Chthulucene*, cit., p. 30.

Donna Haraway speaks, in this regard, of “worlding”¹³⁰, or creating openings for new possible patterns¹³¹, which can then disregard and distance themselves completely from the (often predictable) models of action we are accustomed to relying on. Practising a different society requires the ability to imagine different relationships: different roles of power, different gender configurations, as well as different attributions of correspondences between genders and roles. And it is difficult to find a more suitable arena for practising imaginative thinking than the artistic horizon. In the case of the theatrical experience, moreover, the ambiguous and oscillating ontological proximity that the stage maintains with everyday life becomes even more of a horizon capable of infecting even the audience in an imaginative, and therefore behavioural, process emancipated from the usual, the habitual, the automatic – in other words, from the discriminating factor that we aim to break down.

Integrating Speculative Fabulations into the artistic composition process is a structural step of central importance that is part of the pedagogical methodologies used in the workshops conducted by the authors of *Fabulamundi*, as was primarily the case, in explicit form, in the suggestions provided by Magdalena Barile and Nathalie Fillion, or in an arrangement that is largely traceable in the approach used by Eva Geatti and which, together with other training strategies used in the workshops, allowed participants to configure in alternative terms the logic from which even a seemingly traditional tool such as dramaturgy could be composed. On the basis of these assumptions, therefore, the context of stage creation becomes a space for the inclusion of alternatives, a space in which it is possible to think differently, to imagine ourselves in a different form, to bridge the gaps that hinder and stumble our dreams. In other words, a space in which to break down the gender dream gap, starting with a *structural* transformation of our imaginative practices.

This aspect is evidenced, once again, by the feedback from participants collected at the end of the workshops:

“What I take home with me is not to be afraid to imagine as many worlds as my mind is capable of producing.”

“I take home new points of view to write, *in ways that I would never imagined.*”

“I think the topic of the biases was the most eye opening for me. It’s crazy how many time we say, do, think or write things that we take for granted without questioning them or thinking where they are coming from. Most of the time we don’t even realize it and I think that’s the main reason why we fall for them. After this experience I’ll definitely try to be more careful and pay more attention on this subject more than before.”

“[The, ed.] workshop seemed like a poetic and profound exploration of how we perceive the world and our place in it, deconstructing hierarchies and separations between humans, objects and the environment.”

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 41.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 49.

“Thinking about what I personally, as an author, theatre professional and individual, consider to be two particular dramaturgical “urgent issues”, especially with regard to our national scene, for which I believe workshops on the subject would be valuable opportunities for training, growth and discussion [I would say, ed.]: the “public-political” imagery within contemporary dramaturgy, often “locked” within the four walls of the domestic-family space, Overcoming gender stereotypes, which are still too often deeply rooted in the processes of imagination and writing in contemporary dramaturgy.”

“The approach was powerful: starting from the body, images and texts to rewrite our way of being in the world and imagine new environments that are not based on the idea of domination, but on fluid interconnection.”

“The approach, which invites us to question the scale of values by which we classify existence, removing the privileged viewpoint of humans, is a powerful impetus to review the way we interact with the world and others.”

“I’ve learned that every experience I’ve had as a girl, no matter how small, has value. I discovered that vulnerability is not a weakness, but a form of courage. And maybe the most important lesson: I’m not alone. Many of us go through similar things – we just don’t always talk about them.”

“The most valuable part was hearing the other girls’ stories. Each of us had different perspectives and experiences, but we all found something in common. It was powerful to see how strong we can be together – even through the fragile honesty of our words. This exchange opened my eyes and helped me look at myself and others with more empathy.”¹³²

Resorting to Speculative Fabulations – it is now evident – means resorting to mechanisms of composition and structuring of the imaginary, its stimuli and its activation: the pedagogical method used to stimulate the creativity of new playwrights is therefore related to which systems of thought, which stories, which concepts, which figures underpin our hypotheses, our horizon of the possible. On the basis of these assumptions, the writing techniques used in the workshops become an indispensable tool for shaping our perception – understood as a willingness to grasp what exists and has existed – as well as our capacity for projective hypothesis – understood as a willingness to embrace, that is, to imagine, what may one day exist and will exist.

As Donna Haraway writes:

It matters which stories tell stories, which concepts think concepts. Mathematically, visually, and narratively, it matters which figures figure figures, which systems systematise systems.

[...] We need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections.¹³³

¹³² From feedback gathered from workshop participants, my italic.

¹³³ D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, cit., p. 101.

It is only on the basis of these abilities, these imaginative exercises, that the scene will be able to suggest and make possible new forms of inclusivity or, to use a formula even closer to Haraway's lexicon¹³⁴, new kinships and alliances that, starting from the transformation of our imaginary and our imagery, break down the limiting sclerosis imposed by traditional relationships of necessity between sexuality and reproduction and, therefore, by traditional roles and customary – and arbitrary – gender expectations. These are, in fact, the processes “that stretch the imagination and can change the story”¹³⁵.

Haraway herself suggests that stimulating the imaginary through the multiplication of possibilities and stimuli is, in itself, a first indispensable step in the potential, creative, inclusive and transformative horizon of Speculative Fabulations when she defines them as an “invitation to participate in a kind of genre fiction committed to strengthening ways to propose near futures, possible futures, and implausible but real nows”¹³⁶. Understood in this way, stimulating the hypothetical and imaginative abilities of future writers for the stage undeniably becomes a way of offering “a pathway into what was not yet but *might* be”¹³⁷.

Section 5 – Conclusions

If we examine the activities aimed at promoting gender inclusivity within the 2023-2025 edition of *Fabulamundi*, we can see that this approach develops through two closely interlinked channels.

The first concerns the careful mapping and evaluation of the textual, narrative, linguistic, and representational devices employed in contemporary dramaturgy to articulate the concepts of femininity and gender, as well as the *relationships* between genders. Particular attention is given to how power relations are structured, how horizons of possibility are imagined, and how these frameworks shape the potentials deemed practicable.

In this sense, it is necessary to consider how much the evaluation tools used must be constantly subjected to careful critical scrutiny and updating, so as never to value only the numerical parameter that can be obtained through a quantitative estimate of the texts, but always integrating this latter value, which is indicative but never exhaustive, within a dense and in-depth contextualisation and critical validation of the results produced. This sensitivity is fostered by the intense debates and constant

¹³⁴ See D. Haraway, *Chthulucene*, cit., p. 147.

¹³⁵ D. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, cit., p. 103.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, my italic.

exchanges with experts and professionals from different fields and disciplines on which Fabulamundi's scouting activity has always been based.

A second path through which the inclusive horizon – particularly from a gender perspective, but always animated by an intersectional sensitivity and awareness – is pursued is that of training, with a focus on identifying and providing pedagogical support to emerging playwrights, with particular attention to the younger generations, their sensibilities and needs, as well as the suggestions they offer. In this context, as has been widely emphasised, however important the thematic focus of the content covered in the workshops and testing grounds for new dramaturgy may be, it is the methodological approach, the educational approach adopted – in other words, the opportunities for stimulation and renewal of the imaginary provided to the playwrights of the future – that plays a decisive role.

Looking at the workshops conducted during the 2023-2025 period, it becomes clear that inclusiveness does not depend primarily on the themes addressed, but on the pedagogical strategies employed. These strategies focus first on creating non-judgmental spaces for discussion, built on the protection and care of each participant's views. Within such spaces, perspectives that differ from the majority can be expressed and safeguarded, affirming the legitimacy of "minor visions" – understood in their complexity, specificity, vulnerability, and their anti-intuitive or non-automatic character.

The inclusive pedagogical approach also extends to strengthening collaborative relationships – among participants, and between participants, specialists, and professionals from different fields. In this way, the workshops create a context that both fosters complementarity and values teamwork, while at the same time protecting the vision of each individual. This dual emphasis is essential: it is the foundation not only of theatrical practice but also of social and community life.

In terms of training, above all, it is the method of stimulating creativity that is a salient feature: although each playwright used a unique personal approach in conducting their workshops, each author was first involved in a careful process of awareness-raising in the field of gender inclusivity designed by the Fabulamundi network itself. Secondly, the workshops were always designed to ensure that participants engaged with at least two distinct professional perspectives – that of the tutor and that of the twinned playwright. More importantly, they were structured to provide constant stimuli that enriched and expanded participants' imaginaries, supporting the kind of world-building that underpins Speculative Fabulations. In this way, the workshops influenced collective and social reconfigurations – mediated and reinforced through artistic experience – of the horizons of possibility, and thus directly impacted the gender dream gap.

Another significant factor underlying Fabulamundi's activities – and one that must be recognised as central to preserving gender inclusivity in a sector as competitive as the performing arts – is the high percentage of women involved as tutors and participants in dramaturgical development workshops. This

element becomes even more decisive when viewed through the lens of intersectional awareness. For artists who belong to socially disadvantaged categories, visibility is already reduced, limiting their ability to safeguard and circulate their perspectives and visions. This, in turn, narrows the margins of inclusion not only for the artists themselves but also for those who might recognise themselves in their ideas and feel represented through them.

The consistent majority presence of women in Fabulamundi's activities therefore plays a crucial role in empowering playwrights of the present and future, as well as the broader range of social categories that can be reflected in their multifaceted and "other" perspectives. For playwrights, participation in workshops and integration into the Fabulamundi network means more than artistic growth. It represents increased opportunities for circulating their work and building social capital in the performing arts sector. It also provides access to international training, specialisation, dissemination, and exchange – opportunities amplified by the translation of texts, which are often developed and staged beyond their country of origin.

It would therefore be reductive, and even didactic, to simply list the methodologies or the topics addressed in the workshops. These are only the foundations for both the harmonious interplay of the different and complementary roles involved in stage composition and for the broader intersubjective horizon of social inclusiveness.

What truly matters, and what emerges from years of intense collaboration within Fabulamundi's diverse community of authors and partners, is the centrality of reciprocity. Reciprocity is the basis of the relationships and exchanges that sustain the intergenerational transmission of specialist knowledge – such as the craft of theatrical writing – and it drives the ongoing expansion of the imaginary that shapes us as *individuals* even before it shapes us as artists.

This is how, through its own *form* of composition, writing becomes a transformative process and a space for representation:

The perspective Annie Ernaux emphasises is that of finding a place in literature for multiple echoes of voices that are not heard, that are not exposed because, most of the time, they do not represent something in the mainstream canon.

But how can we push the limits of the literary canon, too much confined to diminish the power of those considered not legitimate to be authors? Who legitimises whom, and how can writing become a more democratic, transformative practice that empowers voices and makes them more conscious of their ability to express themselves in a powerful way? Can writing be a territory of empowering subjectivities, of enlightening shadowed sensibilities and of playing more empathically with new forms of expression? Can writing give young adults a space of shared intimate and political knowledge, imagining new forms of being present in this world?

Organising words is a way of organising the world around. It is a way of finding new vocabularies for new realities. These realities need to be named by young generations who embrace them differently than we do. Writing is belonging and surpassing. Writing is saying I am here and this is my voice, my vulnerability, my fear. Writing is expanding this I am here, and opening paths to a different *I am here*.¹³⁸

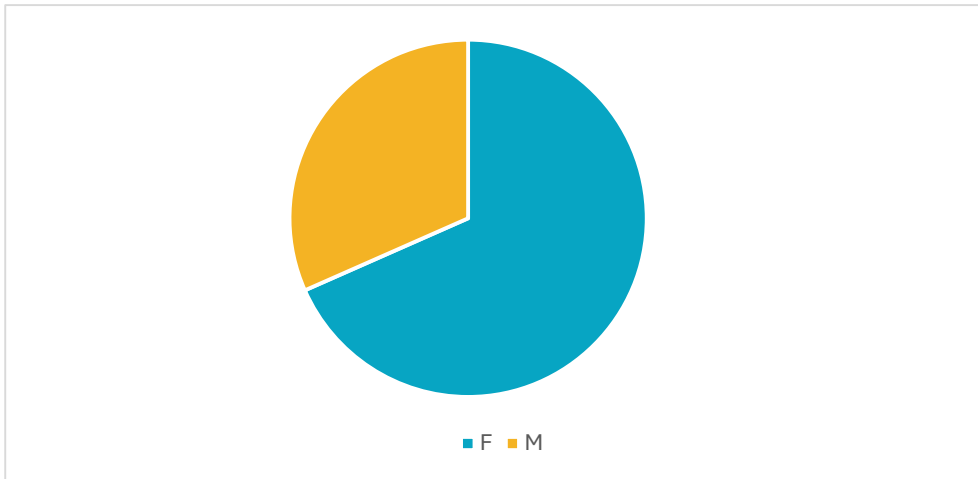
What we have attempted to discuss is therefore not a struggle between the feminine and the masculine. Rather, it is a shared journey of the feminine *with* the masculine, conducted in the interests of both; it is a common search for solutions, changes, visions and rights that will free everyone, regardless of gender, from those outdated ways of thinking which, if perpetuated, can only limit us as artists, but above all as individuals and, even more so, as part of an increasingly inclusive and equal social community.

¹³⁸ M. Michailov, *Hearing Voices, Empowering Emotions For A Transformative Dramaturgy: Teenagers Writing Their Stories*, in AA. VV. *Playwriting Practices in Theatre. A Casebook*, Berlin-Brussels, European Theatre Convention, 2025, p. 85.

Section 6 - Appendix: data set

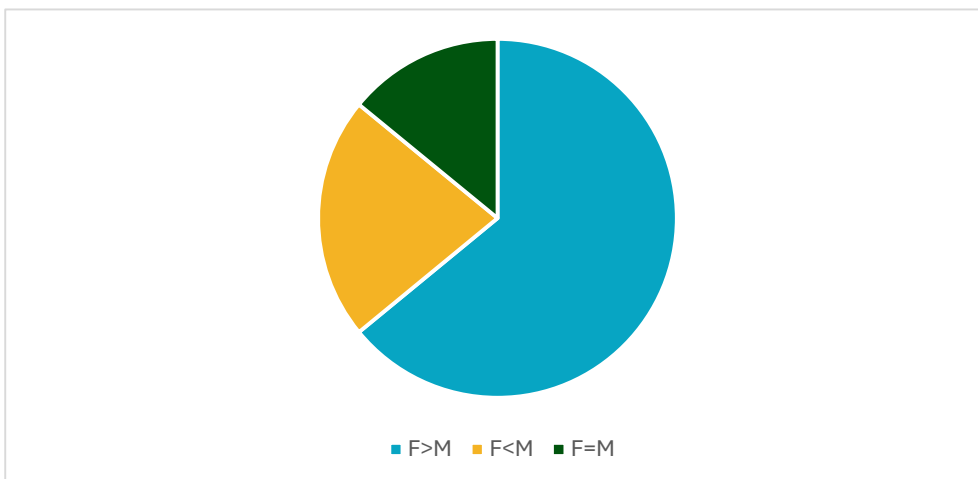
1. Fabulamundi Playwrights

F	68,4%
M	31,6%



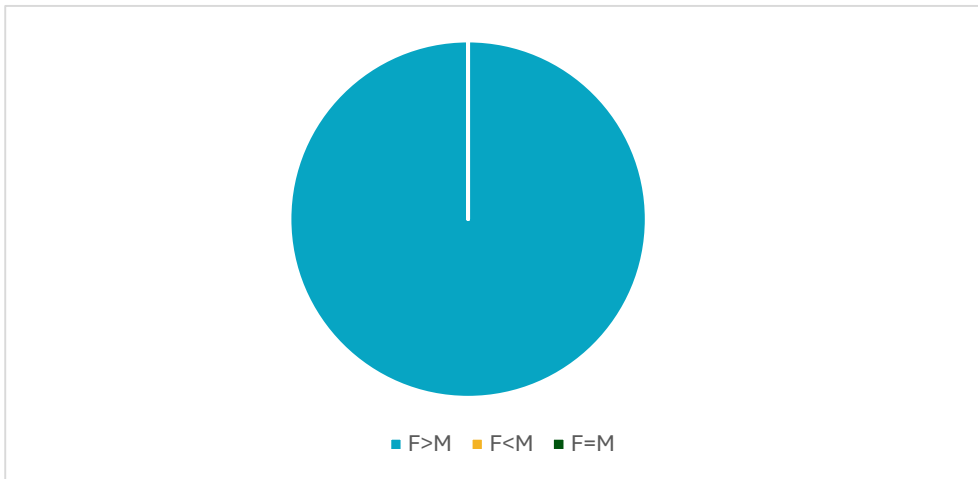
2. Participants in all Fabulamundi activities

F>M	64,06%
F<M	21,88%
F=M	14,06%



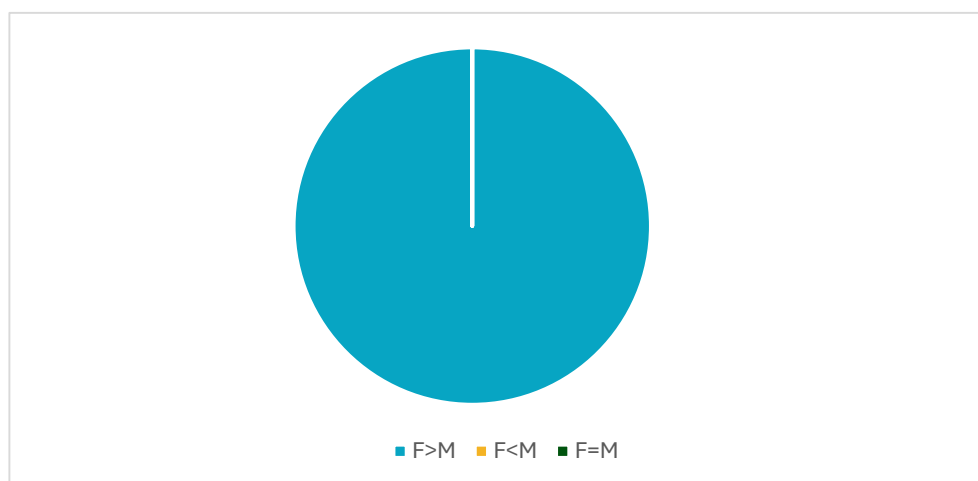
3. Participants in Fabulamundi's activities for Playwrights only

F>M	100%
F<M	0%
F=M	0%



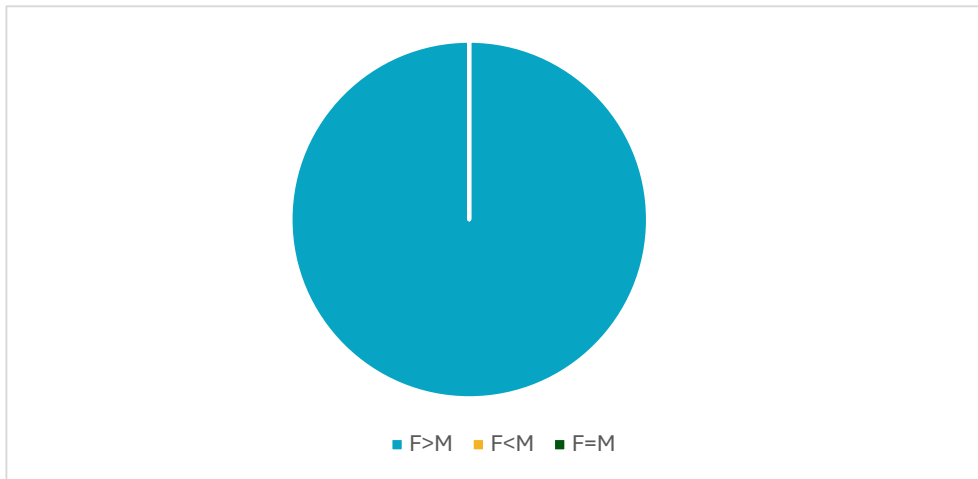
4. Participants in Fabulamundi activities for Partners only

F>M	100%
F<M	0%
F=M	0%



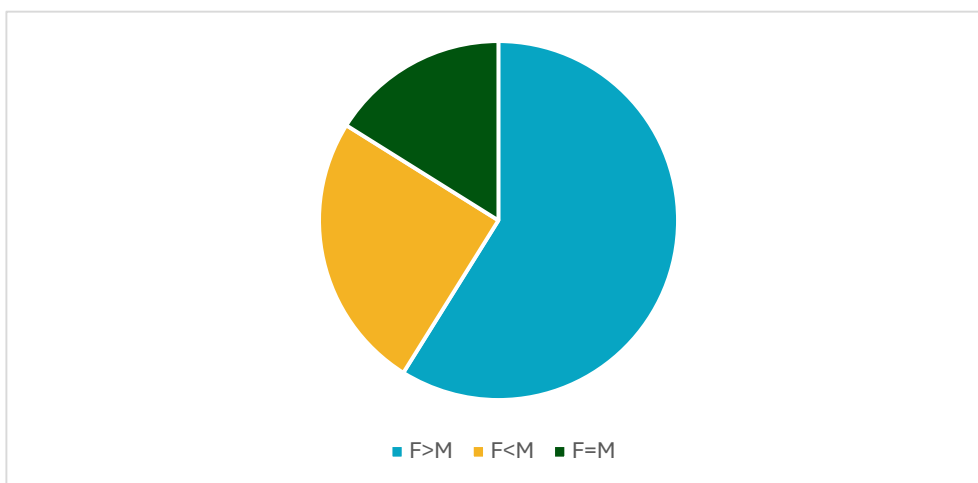
5. Participants in activities for both Fabulamundi Playwrights and Partners

F>M	100%
F<M	0%
F=M	0%



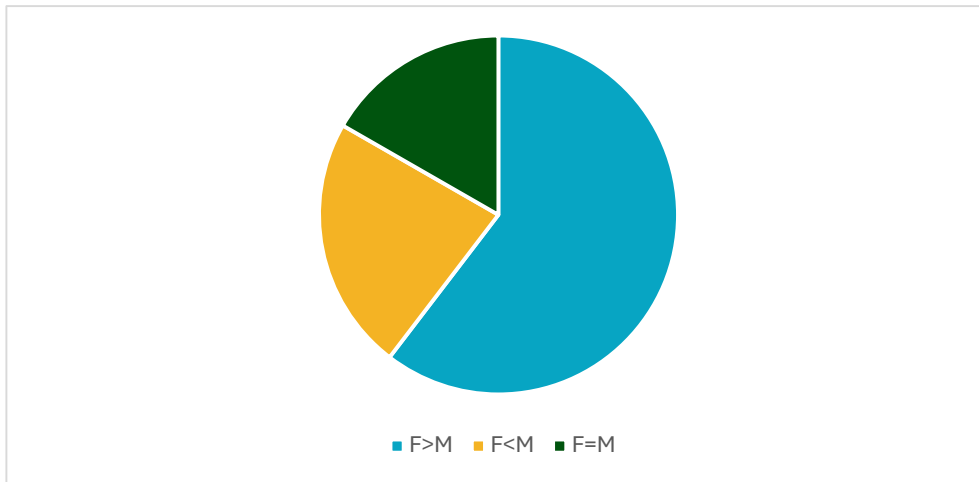
6. Participants in all activities led by Fabulamundi Playwrights

F>M	58,9%
F<M	25,0%
F=M	16,1%



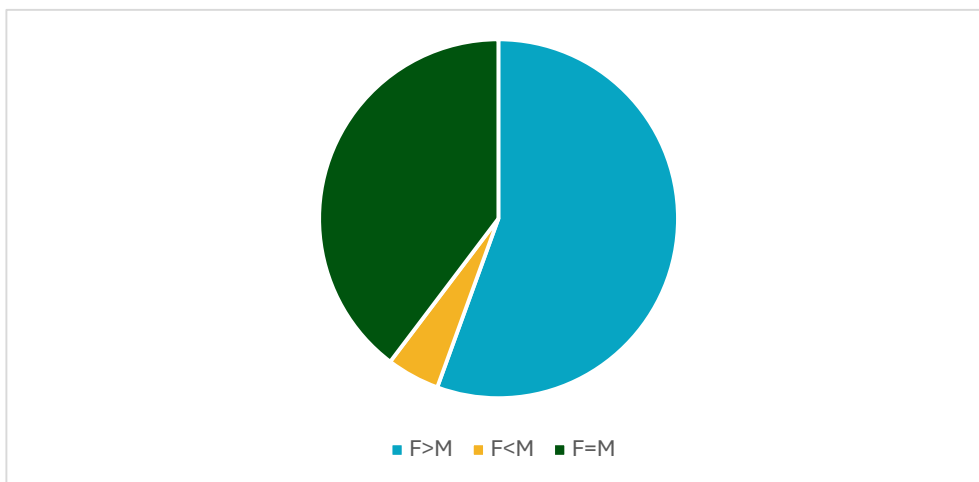
7. Participants in workshops led by Fabulamundi Playwrights

F>M	60,4%
F<M	22,9%
F=M	16,7%



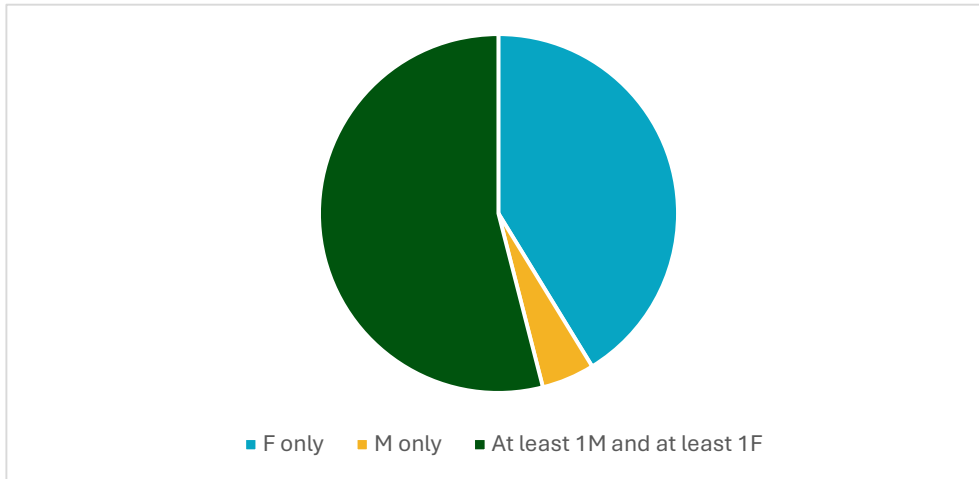
8. Playwrights who led workshops

F>M	55,56%
F<M	4,76%
F=M	39,68%



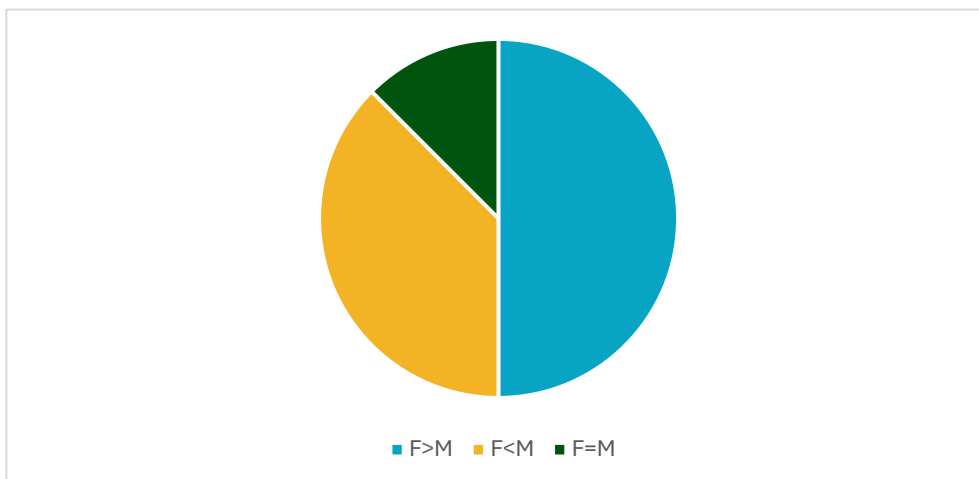
9. Gender distribution in workshop tutoring

F only	41,27%
M only	4,76%
At least 1M and at least 1F	53,97%



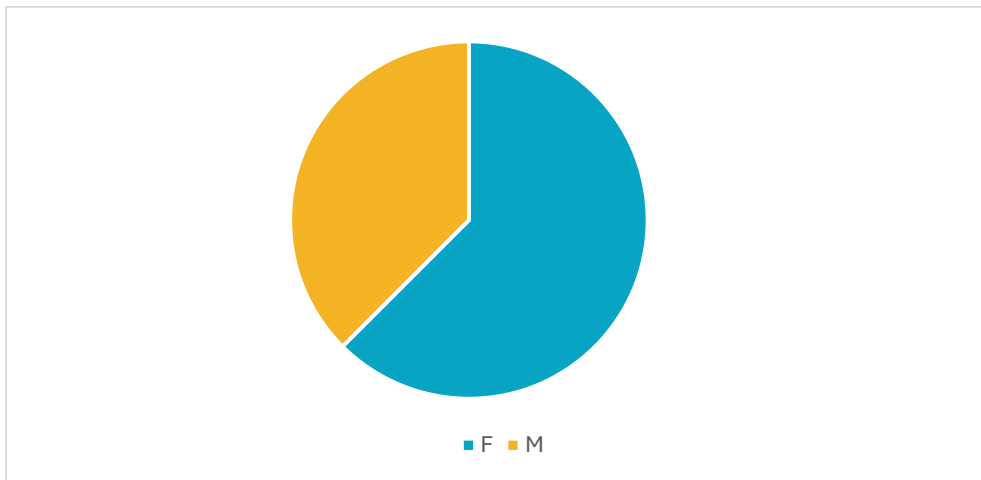
10. Participants in Playgrounds for New Voices organised by Fabulamundi Partners

F>M	50%
F<M	37,5%
F=M	12,5%



11. Young Playwrights involved in the Playgrounds for New Voices organised by Fabulamundi Partners

F>M	62,5%
F<M	37,5%



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Section 9 – About



Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe has been collaborating with European artists, professionals, and institutions for over 10 years, supporting the careers of playwrights and promoting a diverse, inclusive, gender-balanced, and sustainable creative ecosystem.

Following two small-scale and one large-scale editions funded by the European Commission, Fabulamundi *New Voices* marks a new chapter in a successful history of cultural promotion rooted in European values and heritage. This new phase aims to bring contemporary playwriting closer to younger generations.

With a network spanning 10 countries and 13 partners active in the fields of theatre and dramaturgy – including partners from across all European regions and the Western Balkans – *New Voices* is developing an innovative methodology to support and train a new generation of playwrights, placing dramaturgy into the spotlight, removing the barriers to the profession, and integrating digital tools and outputs into the creation process.

www.fabulamundi.eu





PAV creates and realises cultural projects in partnership with artists and institutions.

Born in Rome in 2000, PAV specialises in the production, management and administration of cultural events, festivals, performances, shows and conferences, and works with public national institutions, theatres, foreign embassies, artists and

companies, combining an institutional profile with support for the independent scene and a strong focus on promoting international collaboration and the development of new writing. These different fields of action have always made for dialogue in a natural way: such interaction has proven to be a fundamental resort for many projects and generally for the entire working experience stemming from such connections.

For over ten years, PAV has coordinated Fabulamundi Playwriting Europe, a large-scale project promoting contemporary playwriting across Europe, with a network of 13 partners in 10 countries and more than 200 playwrights involved. PAV is also the lead partner of PLAYGROUND, a second Creative Europe-funded project that supports emerging playwrights in their transition into the professional field.

PAV's multifaceted activity allowed for the development of a privileged standpoint, with a 360° perspective on contemporary theatre.

www.pav-it.eu



Maria Grosso has been a PhD student in *Arts, History, Society* – Performing Arts, at the

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