

# ESPACE PRIVÉ ET ESPACE PUBLIC



"The problem with gender<sup>1</sup> is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are. Imagine how much happier we would be, how much freer<sup>2</sup> to be our true individual selves, if we didn't have the weight of gender expectations<sup>3</sup>."

*Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*

## BLURRED<sup>4</sup> LINES

Until quite recently, family portraits and albums belonged to a few frames in the family house or to a closed cupboard and people looked them up only on special occasions. It was then easy to decide who could or who could not see the beloved pictures. Nowadays we all got into the habit of taking pictures and posting them on the Internet in almost full public view.

What used to be private is now available<sup>5</sup> for all to see. The development of technology and the changes in our collective behaviour are responsible for many more examples of a growing confusion between what we keep for ourselves and what we share, between homelife and worklife, between our private customs and our public actions.

1. gender = *le genre*

2. freer = *plus libres*

3. expectations =  
*attentes*

4. blurred = *floues*

5. available =  
*disponible*



## ALWAYS ON MY MIND

For instance, the number of teleworkers and telecommuters<sup>6</sup> is currently on the rise<sup>7</sup> in the professional world. These people are now investing public places like coffee shops or even their own home space to perform their job tasks outside the traditional workplace. Not so long ago, it was easy to draw the line between one's professional activity and one's personal and family life and keep a healthy work-life balance.

By the end of the 1990s, almost half of the American population had a personal access to the Internet and the use of emails became

6. telecommuters = *télétravailleurs*

7. on the rise = *en hausse*



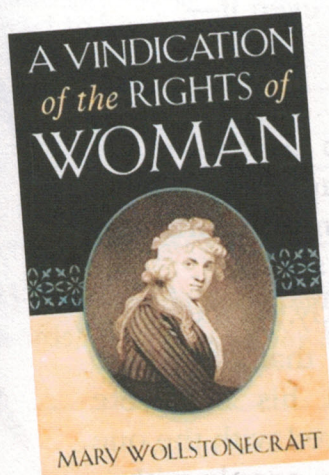
# PRIVATE SPACE AND PUBLIC SPACE

the preferred method for sending messages during the first decade of the 21st century. From then on, business followed the trend and adopted this new means of communication between workers. Henceforth<sup>8</sup>, the exchange of professional electronic mails became constant, increasingly interfering with individuals' private lives. Workers are now constantly reminded of the tasks they must perform and statistics show that the lives of their families are greatly disrupted.

## WHO RUNS<sup>9</sup> THE WORLD?

The end of the 19th century can be seen as a regression: in Western societies, men became the only legitimate money-makers of the household and women's role was now limited to being church-goers preserving morality in the town and being mothers. However, the development of women's education and the two global conflicts opened spaces again for women in the workforce. The feminization of the workplace went along with the women's increasing demand for equal rights, notably – but not solely – in terms of voting representation, individual independence and wages<sup>10</sup>.

In the English-speaking world, such advancements can be followed in the arts, specifically in literature and the celebrated works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Dora Montefiore or Edith Wharton.



The work  
of Mary Wollstonecraft



- 8. henceforth =  
dès lors
- 9. run = gère
- 10. wages =  
salaires

