

**VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHY AND SPAM. FRAUD AND FEAR IN DECEPTIVE
NARRATIVES ON THE INTERNET**

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Abstract

With just couple of clicks, Internet users are able to send messages to several people at the same time in a fast, handy and cheap way. If we add the possibility of remaining anonymous, we are creating a wonderful scenario for spammers.

The main aim of this paper is to present briefly how *fear* contributes to the construction of deception through the spam narratives. Our virtual ethnography suggests a parallelism between the re-production of gender stereotypes in the new communication tools and the same stereotypes found in traditional fairytales, so we will focus on how fear, understood as a continuum, connects spam and fairytales, and how this parallelism and the gender stereotypes found in both kinds of texts can interact with the linguistic mechanisms used by spammers to make their stories believable.

The corpus we have used for this research contains approximately 450 emails, between four and fifty-two lines extension, written in English, Spanish and French, and received between late 2009 and mid-2011. The structure usually consists of a presentation, a reason for the contact, a justification, a request or response data or a farewell. These emails are signed by men and women, but the real identity of individuals who send these mails or promote its delivery remains unknown. In this communication, we will present and analyze some of the most representative mails.

Our analysis will be based in tools and concepts provided by Applied Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, without forgetting the gender perspective.

Keywords: *spam, fear, narratives, virtual ethnography, gender identity.*

1. Introduction

Internet offers its users not only the possibility of sending messages in a fast, handy and cheap way, but also the chance to remain anonymous while doing so, thus creating a wonderful scenario for spammers and all kind of cyber-criminals.

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Spam is a very frequent phenomenon –if you have an email account, you are probably receiving some daily or weekly spam emails on different matters- and is mainly seen as disturbing by Internet users. There are many studies testing the best ways to keep this kind of emails far from our inboxes, but most of them are more occupied with their syntax and keywords, in order to provide us with efficient tools for spam detection.

Our study aims at deciphering the communicative strategies used by spammers to evoke to specific feelings and ideas in recipients, that is, at finding out how the spam narratives are constructed to produce certain reactions in the reader, taking into account the main objective of these emails: getting money in a fraudulent way.

While analysing our corpus, we have found a parallelism between the re-production of gender stereotypes in these texts and in traditional fairy-tales, as well as a relation between these gender attributions and the construction of fear in these narratives. Our aim in this communication is to present briefly how *fear* contributes to the construction of deception through the spam narratives, how it is related to the gender stereotypes, and how spammers use these mechanisms and tools to deceive people.

2. Objectives

Our analysis is aimed at answering the following research questions:

How does fear contribute to deception in spam e-mails?

What kind of relation can we establish between the narratives in spam e-mails and fairytales?

How do gender stereotypes connect these narratives?

In order to answer these questions, it is important to highlight the fact that fear will be understood here as a continuum, from simply “being afraid of something” to “being terrified”.

3. Methodology

The study of our corpus is a complex and multidisciplinary one, since we need to establish relations between gender stereotypes, gender/ed identities, emotions (fear, in this case), narratives and deception or veracity. Thus, we have developed an interdisciplinary methodology, consisting of a linguistic and discursive analysis of the narratives that takes into account concepts such as that of gender attributions, and that de-constructs the narratives to find out the mechanisms used by their writers to create a believable illusion.

During the first part of our research, we have paid attention to linguistic and discursive features, focusing on fear. Then, we have been able to link spam e-mails and fairytales through the construction of fear. This construction happens to be intimately related to gender stereotypes.

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In order to frame our analysis, we must say that spam e-mails are interpreted as any other communicative act, composed, in this case, by a sender, a recipient and an electronically-sent message. The difference here is the fact that sender and recipient do not know each other and are not members of any group, since they do not share characteristics as their ethnic origin or their residence place.

This fact forces the sender to make the contact reason as credible and effective as possible, so that the recipient does not stop reading and send the e-mail directly to the trash folder. And here, as we will see, the relevance of coherence in the (gender/ed) identity created becomes essential.

If we dig deeper, there is another interpretation or reference framework for these narratives: the one of fairytales. It is evoked thanks to the introduction of certain stereotyped characters such as the victim, the villain or the hero (to be played, invariably, by the recipient), and it is due to this unconscious references that we are likely to at least hesitate –even for just one second- when we read one of this e-mails for the first time. Our emotions are deeply related to our subconscious, and nothing like a fairytale to bring our inner child to the front-stage.

Given our interest in narratives, our study will focus on those spam e-mails with a pseudo-business or pseudo-personal content, since their narratives are richer and less advertising-like. It is noticeable that e-mails with a pseudo-business content are sent by males (in 99% of the documents studied) and pseudo-personal e-mails are sent by females (again, in a 99% of the documents analyzed), thus maintaining the traditional association between the private sphere and women, or the public sphere and men. It is clear that our methodology, then, contains tools from Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as concepts from Gender Studies:

Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2001) give us tools to focus on linguistic and discursive elements of the narratives, that is, sentences, words and so on, as well as the very concept of “narrative”. We have analyzed the emails from a critical perspective, taking into account the social factors that would influence the identity of the main character (gender and ethnicity, mainly). We know these identities to be false, so our main concern was to find out the stereotypes and social images behind the gendered identities, and how they contribute to the creation of fear in these narratives.

Gender studies (Butler, 1999, Beltrán et al. 2001) have provided us with the concepts of gender stereotypes and gender attributions, which have proven to be very useful regarding the gendered identities we are studying.

One of the elements of our research that can be striking is the concept of “virtual ethnography”. We are used to ethnographies involving methods such as the participant observation, and it might be a little shocking to see the adjective “virtual” added to it. However, if we consider that ethnography involves the overt or covert

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participation of the researcher “in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time”, then, in fact, we will see that there is nothing easier than making a virtual ethnography, thanks to new technologies.

As Internet users, we share some conventions with other Internet users, and this shared knowledge allows us to find some useful clues for our research. For instance, Crystal (2001) establishes that Internet users do not like and even punish (virtually, erasing the message, for example) spammers, in a wide sense of the term. This is the very reason for the lines written by the Nigerian scam e-mails senders in order to justify the contact with an unknown person.

Also, we have collected e-mails for almost two years, which could be considered an extended period of time, and this allows us to observe the development –if any- of these kind of e-mails regarding the nature of the narratives and the number of documents collected.

4. Data

Regarding our data, the corpus collected contains 450 emails, received between late 2009 and mid-2011, with an extension that varies between fifty and seven hundred words, written in English, Spanish and French. The basic structure usually consists of a presentation, a reason for the contact, a justification, a data or response request and/or a farewell.

Example 1 (M29032010)

1. With Due Respect,
2. Good day,
3. I am writing this mail for you to help me. I will really
4. like to have a good relationship with you, and i have a
5. special reason why i decided to contact you. I decided to
6. contact you because of the urgency of my situation here, I
7. am LIZZY MANBO, 22years old girl from Liberia, the only
8. daughter of Late AHMED MANBO, the deputy minister of
9. national security under the leadership of president Charles
10. Taylor who is now in exile after many innocent soul were
11. killed, My father was killed by government of Charles
12. Taylor, he accuse my father of coup attempt.

13. I am constrained to contact you because of the abuse I am
14. receiving from my step mother. She planned to take away all
15. my late father's treasury and properties from me since the
16. unexpected death of my beloved Father. Meanwhile i wanted to
17. escape to the USA but she hides away my international
18. passport and other valuable travelling documents.Luckly she
19. did not discover where i kept my fathers File which contains
20. important documents. So I decided to run to the refugee camp
21. where i am presently seeking asylum under the United Nations
22. High Commission for the Refugee here in Ouagadougou ,

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23. Republic of Burkina Faso.
24. I wish to contact you personally for a long term business
25. relationship and investment assistance in your Country. My
26. father of blessed emery deposited the sum of (US\$6,000,000)
27. Million Dollars in Bank with my name as the next of kin.
28. However, I shall forward you with the necessary documents on
29. confirmation of your acceptance to assist me for the
30. transfer and statement of the fund in your country. As you
31. will help me in an investment, and i will like to complete
32. my studies, as i was in my 2 year in the university, when
33. the crisis started.
34. It is my intention to compensate you with 50% i will take
35. 40% and 10% will be any fee may come out in this transfer of
36. the total money for your services and the balance shall be
37. my investment capital. This is the reason why i decided to
38. contact you. Please all communications should be through
39. this email address only for confidential purposes. As soon
40. as i receive your positive response showing your interest i
41. will put things into action immediately. In the light of the
42. above, I shall appreciate an urgent message indicating your
43. ability and willingness to handle this transaction
44. sincerely.
45. I am waiting your urgent and positive response. Please do
46. keep this to yourself and every communications shall be made
47. through this email address alone for confidential purpose
48. and you should not disclose it till i come over to your
49. country, once the fund has been transferred into your bank
50. count. I will send you my pictures as soon as i get your
51. good reply from you. Again please tell me more about
52. yourself. and i will give you application letter of claim
53. which you will fill and send through the bank Email for
54. urgent transfer. I am waiting to hear from you urgently
55. please.
56. Thank you.
57. Miss Lizzy Manbo.

Example 2 (H21042010)

58. INTERNATIONAL POLICE ASSOCIATION UNITED STATES SECTION
59. (IPA)
60. Region No. 2 New York City
61. P.O. Box 804 Knickerbocker Station
62. New York City, New York 10002-0804 usa
63. Attn:
64. We, office of the international police association (IPA)
65. hereby write to inform you that we caught a diplomatic lady
66. called Mrs. Vernon Wallace at (John F Kennedy International
67. Airport) here in New York with consignment box filed with
68. united state dollars.
69. Meanwhile, base on our interview to the diplomat she said

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70. that the consignment box belongs to you, that she was sent
71. by Dr. John Lopez to deliver the consignment box to your
72. doorstep not knowing that the content of the box is money.
73. The diplomat also said that her first transit in the state
74. was at Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International Airport
75. Ohio..

76. Now, the diplomat is under detention in the office of (IPA)
77. security, and we cannot release her until we carry out our
78. proper investigation on how this huge amount of money
79. managed to be yours before we will release her with the box.
80. So, in this regards you are to reassure and prove to us that
81. the money you are about to receive is legal by sending us
82. the Award Ownership Certificate showing that the money is
83. not illegal.

84. Note, that the Award Ownership Certificate must to be
85. secured from the office of the senate president in Nigeria,
86. because that is the only office that will issue you the
87. original Award Ownership Certificate of this funds.

88. You are advised to forward immediately the Award Ownership
89. Certificate if you have it with you, but if you did not have
90. it we will urge you to contact back the sender of the
91. diplomat to help you secure the Award Ownership Certificate
92. if at all you did not have it.

93. Below is the contact information of the person that sent the
94. diplomat
95. Name: Dr. John Obi.
96. Email: dr.johnobi111@gmail.com
97. Tele: 2348094104679

98. Furthermore, we are giving you only but 5 working business
99. days to forward the requested Award Ownership Certificate.
100. Please note that we shall get back to you after the 3
101. working business days, that if you didn't come up with
102. the certificate we shall confiscate the funds into World
103. Bank account then charge you for money laundry, but if
104. you forward the Award Ownership Certificate then we will
105. release diplomat with your consignment box also gives
106. you every back up on the money.

107. Thanks for your understanding, co-operation and
108. continued patronage.

109. Yours Truly,
110. I.P.A REGION NO:2 THANKS.
111. DOCTOR DOUGLAS H. KING DDS.
112. Committee of
113. Police Societies, NYPD

Example 3 (M23072011)

1. De la señora Elizabeth Nwakoh,
2. 11 rue d'Cocody,

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3. Abidján, Costa de Marfil
4. Más querido,
5. Saludo a usted, mi nombre es Elizabeth Nwakoh, tengo 21 años
6. y soy de nacionalidad Costa de Marfil y vivo en Abidján, Costa
7. de Marfil. Yo soy la hija del señor Daniel Nwakoh,
8. un gran empresario y agricultor de café y cacao. De hecho, mi padre
9. era el asesino por sus compañeros que creían que se beneficiaban
10. de su muerte. Y por desgracia para mí, yo soy hijo huérfano
11. ahora sin mi familia. Como la única hija de mis padres,
12. normalmente la abeja del beneficiario a la suma total de
13. (9.700 dólares EE.UU., 000) NUEVE MILLONES SETECIENTOS
14. MIL DOLARES que mi padre depositó en una empresa de seguridad
15. aquí en Cote d'Ivoire, por eso estoy escrito usted, por favor
16. lea detalladamente esta carta de mi vida y tener un corazón
17. de bondad para que me ayude a transferir el dinero a su cuenta
18. en su país para la inversión por lo que voy a ser capaz de llegar
19. a usted para seguir con mi educación secundaria.

20. Por favor, sé que estás en buena fe, que me ayude
21. porque estoy sin familia y yo te prometo una garantía del 30%
22. de mi dinero una vez que el dinero se transfiera en su país
23. el 15% de interés y un 15% los costos determinados para mí
24. de los gastos, y el 70% será para inversión en sus propiedades
25. inmobiliarias. Nota: Tengo los documentos de depósito
26. de los fondos que mi padre se me otorgue antes de su muerte
27. para demostrar que lo que estoy diciendo es verdad.
28. Voy a estar esperando a leer de usted lo antes posible.
29. Un cordial saludo.
30. Sra.Elizabeth Nwakoh,

Example 4 (H17062011)

1. Hello,From Mr.Tony
2. How are you and your family?
3. As the world is defined as a global village,
4. I don't want you to get this letter as a surprise but as an opportunity
5. that will put smile on your face. With due respect
6. I propose business to you, to make it brief I want to transfer
7. \$12.8 Million united state dollars into your bank account.
8. The fund belong to our deceased customer who died
9. with his entire family in 2008 china Earthquake ,
10. leaving nobody for the claim and as such, I decided
11. to contact you as to enable us claim the fund.
12. 50% of this fund will be for you and 50% for me.
13. Hit reply on this e-mail to Contact me only if you're interested
14. in this business and for more details.
15. I am assuring you that the transaction is 100% Risk Free.
16. Sincerely,
17. Mr.Tony ,
18. Head,Audit & compliance.

5. Results and discussion

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Basing our study in the methodology explained in section 2, that is, analyzing the linguistic and discursive elements of the narratives and taking into account the abovementioned tools and concepts, we achieved the following results.

5.1 Language, gendered identity and stereotypes

In some of the studied narratives, we found sentimental discourses on love, compassion, loneliness, goodness and wickedness, as in examples 1 and 3. Excuses and apologies, present in examples 1, 3 and 4, may help the sender in establishing a communication through the creation of some sort of trustworthiness that makes the story believable for the recipient, who could otherwise even refuse to continue reading a message from an unknown person.

Regarding the topics used in the four examples, we have studied the number of appearances and the frequency of several terms. Since it is our intention to remain in the field of qualitative analysis, we will just indicate here that terms related to illnesses, feelings and relatives are more frequent in the female e-mails, while those related to financial and business terms appear more frequently in male e-mails.

5.1.1 Fear and gender

When it comes to “death”, certainly one of the most common fears, our results show that there are at least three types that can be easily distinguished: when the dead person is going to be the sender (who is ill and about to die); when the dead person is a relative whose death is due to political or business-related causes, mainly (example 1, lines 11-12, and example 3, lines 8-10); or when the dead person is a client whose death is, most of the times, an accident.

If death is related to one of the first two cases, it brings suffering, sadness and pain, appealing to compassion. However, in the last case, senders appeal to greediness, leaving the money free and ownerless, available for the clever recipient that takes the opportunity to get rich quick.

5.2 Relation with fairytales

Fairytales are addressed to children whose fears need to be dealt with, while in our spam narratives, fears are used to create empathy and a feeling that should impel the reader to act urgently. Also, the possible real fears of the recipient need to be set aside, that is, not being believed or being caught, and that is what senders insist on the legitimacy and legality of the recipient’s possible actions.

Given the differences between the intentions of these two genres, it may seem that the language used in spam e-mails and fairy-tales should be very different. However, when we analyse their narratives from a linguistic and discursive perspective, we find

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that they share some terms and characters, as well as the actions they perform and the characteristics they have.

Thus, we have found similarities based on the appearance of characters as the stepmother or the hero (“I am constrained to contact you because of the abuse I am receiving from my step mother”, example 1, lines 13-14), but also on the actions and stories, such as that of the reward for being clever or compassionate and courageous.

If we analyze even deeper the first two e-mails, we will find the following issues regarding fear, fairytales and gender stereotypes:

1) In Example 1 (M29032010), the sender is a female (“LIZZY MANBO, 22years old girl from Liberia, the only daughter of Late AHMED MANBO”). The contact is due to fear and need for help (which, in fact, turns out to be business): “I decided to contact you because of the urgency of my situation here” (lines 5-6), “My father was killed by government of Charles Taylor” (11-12), “I am constrained to contact you because of the abuse I am receiving from my step mother...” (13-20). We can find some discursive and linguistic features that express the sender’s pretended fear, based on her terrible past experience and current situation: for example, we can appreciate the use of terms such as “help me”, “urgency”, “death”, “killed”, “crisis”, “escape”. These terms give us the impression of a girl whose life is at risk: she needs to escape urgently, her father has been killed (compare “kill” with “die”), her fairytale-like stepmother is abusing her. The relation with fairy-tales is obvious: the action emerges from this escape story, and the protagonist is like a princess, whose father died and whose stepmother is the enemy, as in *Cinderella*. Naturally, the recipient must feel as a hero or a magic assistant, using the Literature Studies terminology. The sender has “a special reason” (4-5), she “wanted to escape to the USA” (16-17), she “kept father file wich contains important documents” (19-20), she “decided to run to the refugee camp” (20), she is “presently asylum” (21). These actions shape her character and her gender like a warrior princess in a fairy-tales context. Thus, senders make characters identifiable with the characters in traditional tales: the weak female that needs help (just an excuse for the reader to be considered a hero or magical assistant if he –or, more unlikely, she- reacts and helps her); the bad stepmother abusing her stepdaughter.

In this case, fear is felt by the sender and expressed as due to pure terror and pain, first, and then to anxiety or nervousness, which explains the urgency of the request. The writer’s father is supposed to have been killed by a terrible government (terror and pain) “Miss Lizzy” is supposed to have been abused by her stepmother and to be a refugee in Burkina Faso. Thus, she has been apparently living in a Rapunzel or Cinderella-like atmosphere and, as they did in their stories, she has misled her stepmother with her talent, but she needs a “magical assistant” (that is, the fairy-godmother, for example, impersonated by the recipient). Due to several factors, such as the gender or ethnic stereotypes (will we believe this story if starred by a German boy?), the situation is perceived to be real and causes empathy in the recipient, as well as possible remorse for not having acted if it turns out to be true.

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2) In Example 2 (H21042010), the sender is a male (Doctor Douglas, from the International Police Association). The contact is apparently due to official affairs, business (“we caught a diplomatic lady called Mrs. Vernon Wallace at...” (lines 64-72), “So, in this regards you are to reassure and prove to us that the money you are about to receive...” (80-83)).

In this example, there are some discursive-linguistic features expressing or causing fear: the use of terms such as “caught” (65), “detention” (76) and “illegal” (83), -and expressions such as “until we carry out our proper investigation on how this huge amount of money managed to be yours before we will release her with the box” (77-79), “You are advised to forward immediately the Award Ownership Certificate if you have it with you” (88-89), “Furthermore, we are giving you only but 5 working business days to forward the requested Award Ownership Certificate” (98-99)-, are probably meant to frighten somehow the recipient, who could be in trouble with international police authorities, and, at the same time, they are tempting him/her with a huge amount of money that can be his/hers if they get the certificate from the contact provided in this e-mail. We can observe some kind of urgency, since the recipient is given a deadline by the authorities, and the diplomat who was supposed to deliver the money has been caught and arrested, apparently, because of the recipient’s fault.

This spam e-mail may not seem related to fairy-tales in a superficial level, but we can observe some interesting things if we dig deeper. In the first place, we can identify a “victim” or person in trouble (the lady diplomat, that is, a woman), a sort of “hero” (the recipient, the only person that can confirm the information and save her from prison) and a reward (an important issue that we have not taken into account before). In the second place, this narrative could be included as the first part of an adventure novel and, ultimately, an adventure novel is somehow a longer and more complex fairy-tale in which the main character, unlike heroes in fairy-tales, may not end up well.

The main relation with fairy-tales here is based then, not only on the characters, but also on their situations and actions: there is a person that has been caught by the police (again, a “diplomatic lady” (65) that is locked) and a person (the recipient) that has to take an action within a deadline so the “victim” gets free... and in order to get an unexpected reward (that is, the treasure search and the release of the “princess”). In this case, there seem to be no fear felt by the sender on the narrative, since the sender represents the authority. On the contrary, there is a possible fear here for recipients: the one of being involved in something dangerous or illegal without knowing why or how, and this is counteracted by the “reward”.

Besides, mentioning an authority such as the International Police marks the story as true and sufficiently justified. The recipient, not knowing the people involved in this narration, can feel some anxiety and nervousness regarding dangerousness and illegality. The hero (the recipient) is then told by the ogre or dragon (the police) how to rescue the princess (the diplomat lady) –what is very unlikely to happen in a fairytale- and is also told about the huge reward he will get for doing this, thus being tempted in order to make his/her fears disappear.

6. Conclusion

Our aim in this paper was to present an interdisciplinary methodology that has proven to be helpful for research regarding issues associated with communication through new technologies and its relation to traditional ways of communication. We have analyzed several examples to show the relation between the gender stereotypes contained in traditional fairytales and their re-production in the new narratives we receive by e-mail every day, even though the intention of fairytales and Nigerian scam e-mails is not the same, given the potentially criminal character of the last ones.

Our analysis suggests, firstly, that spam e-mail narratives use fear as a mechanism for evoking some feelings on the recipient, in order to deceive them and impel them to act and, secondly, that the “secret message” of not trusting and being afraid mentioned by Eco (2012) is also present in these narratives, as a key part of the strategy used for establishing some kind of intimacy between the author and the recipient. In the examples we have selected, this happens in a more implicit way, but there are some examples in which this fear is made explicit by the sender, with assertions as “sorry for you might be thinking who is this”.

On the one side, the sender can be presented as fearful because of a series of terrible events that leave her (most of the times, the main character will be a woman) in a risky situation. Some other factors, as gender or ethnicity, or even using parts of an authority discourse, will contribute to evoking a mental frame in the recipient, in which he/she will be the hero –or a “magical assistant” to the main character, in any case-, the only one able to help the weak and life-beaten maid. Fear is used here to appeal to empathy and mercy.

On the other side, the sender can present a situation in which the recipient is the only one who can, not only rescue the locked “princess”, but also get a generous reward, that is, get the “Pot of Gold”. This story may seem very simple, so the discourse of an authority is needed here: that is why the sender is a professional such as a policeman. But, as a result of this very narrative, the recipients can find themselves in a risky situation, involved in something dangerous and illegal, and this may cause some fear in him/her. So, the sender does the only thing that can be done: provide the recipient with the steps that need to be taken and guarantee the achievement of the goal if they are taken correctly, that is, obtaining the reward. Here, fear is not used to appeal to a feeling but to avoid it, in order for the sender to appeal to the recipient’s greed.

As we have demonstrated, rewards, princesses, villains (stepmothers, especially) and heroes appear in these narratives, giving the recipient an interpretation framework that will made him/her impersonate the shrewd and courageous hero that saves the damsel in distress and gets an economic reward for it.

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Gender stereotypes are present here, as they are in fairytales, giving the female characters a weak –or wicked, if we talk about the stepmother- nature, and the male characters an authoritarian one.

Also, the ability to deceive through these spam e-mails has a lot of things to do with fake and hidden identities. When anonymity is a synonym of distrust and fear, it can act as a *foucaultian* control/power mechanism that makes it possible for these e-mails to, sometimes, achieve their goals. As Foucault (1965) suggests, society acts according to certain power and control mechanisms that, most of the times, are virtual and non-material. The fear that these e-mails can cause in their readers is, in many cases, the same fear that individuals can perceive in their daily tasks. Fear of a family tragedy such as the one of our “princess” (in example 1) or fear generated by economic and working insecurities in our current society makes possible the fact that some readers identify themselves with these senders or creates an empathy bond between them. It is an intimacy process that allows the reader to feel and listen to emotions from someone who is suffering or who is in a dangerous situation, even if fictitious. This kind of empathy allows us to feel dangers that are very far from our daily tasks, but that we can imagine and perceive as real.

Every technological innovation has its negative, fraudulent or damaging aspects for the users, and spam e-mails are just one example. An information and communication medium such as electronic e-mails finds in Spam its damaging and “evil” practice.

In our daily practices, we have to learn how to deal with these fears, trying to construct and de-construct through a critical analysis (just as the one we proposed), or through a good anti-virus that filters these kind of e-mails. Since we can find a 20% of spam e-mails in our personal electronic mail every morning, we need to live with this constant element.

Definitely, believing in spam is like believing in fairytales, and, even if it may seem to be too naïve, most users are susceptible to fall into this trap. Long ago learnt gender stereotypes as well as our childish fears stay with us during adulthood and some people learn how to evoke them, to deceive others by using certain mechanisms to bring them back, in order to meet their goals: getting people’s money. That is why we decided to make this parallelism between spam and fairytales, and that is why we suggest that Internet users pay a little more attention when reading these ingeniously written narratives.

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