

A double-smashed body: (in)visibility of femicide victims in newspaper headlines

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Abstract

This paper discusses the journalistic construction of femicide victims in newspaper headlines from two Brazilian news portals, based on the assumption that journalism, as an opinion maker, produces scenes of visibility which both include and exclude subjectivities. The research is based on theoretical and methodological bias of Discourse Analysis in dialogue with social sciences, and it examines four headlines published in 2015, year of sanctioning the Law 13,104 against femicide in Brazil. This study opens to a reflection on the journalistic modes of production concerning news of femicide by arguing that in the analyzed texts the body is constructed as a place where the victim is paradoxically exposed and silenced.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis. (In)visibility. Femicide. Journalism. Silence.

Introduction

Violence against women¹ has been seen as just one more among the many forms of violence naturalized and/or institutionalized in our social environment. In many countries, violent acts such as beatings, rapes and mutilations are commonly taken as a form of punishment for women who dishonor the name of their families as a way of adapting bodies and behaviors to moral (and even aesthetic) standards or as parts of rites of purification and

1 By using the plural “women” as well as the expressions “the feminine” and “the feminine condition” one aim to represent different, plural and possible ways of being a woman, although the headlines analyzed report only the femicide of cisgender women. This choice is an important aspect to understand the production of women (in)visibility in the news. The authors would like to thank the colleague Paulo Eduardo Doro Prestes for the comments and insights concerning this subject.

initiation into adult life². Over the centuries, violent practices directed at feminine condition continue to exist, and the concern to prevent them is still very recent.

However, under the influence of various movements fighting for women's rights there has been growing concern about the physical and psychological health of victims who have suffered or are suffering any kind of aggression. In Latin America since the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975 - which defended physical integrity and women's rights to decide on their own bodies - to recent movements for the humanization of childbirth, safe abortion and the reduction of all forms of violence against women, much has been built in terms of public policies and historical recognition. Many Latin American countries (such as Uruguay, Guatemala and Mexico, the latter notably since the worldwide repercussion of the Algodonero camp case in the 1990s) have also proposed to debate and rethink the criminalization of femicide as well as the role of the State as the main body for the support and protection of women. In Brazil, the 1988 Constitution assures that it is the State's duty to curb violence in family relations (BRASIL, 1988). As measures in this sense, in the 2000s there was the creation of the Secretariat of Policies for Women, in 2003, the National Plan of Policies for Women, in 2005³, and the Specialized Network of Assistance to Women, in accordance with Law 11,340, in 2006.

The Maria da Penha Law, as it latter became known, is the first Brazilian law to define any form of violence directed at women - physical, psychological, sexual, moral, and patrimonial - as a crime punishable by imprisonment from three months to three years. Moreover, the sanctioning of Law 13,104 (Femicide Law) on March 9, 2015 carried out by President Dilma Rousseff, enabled a social and political strengthening of movements for women's rights, because based on that law femicides enter the list of heinous crimes⁴.

However, despite the existence of these measures and the approval of the femicide law, Brazil still ranks fifth among the most violent countries for women to live with a rate of 4.8 deaths per 100,000 women. In ten years, from 2003 to 2013, the number of femicides increased from 3,937 to 4,762, characterizing an increase of 21% and the murder of 13 women

2 One remembers here the cases of "corrective" rapes and female genital mutilation, which occurred mostly in countries on the African and Asian continents, but also the countless naturalized occurrences of violence, such as in cases of obstetric violence and aggressions against transgender women, especially in Brazil.

3 Available at: http://bvsmis.saude.gov.br/bvsmis/publicacoes/pnpm_compacta.pdf. Accessed on: January 6th 2020.

4 Recently, although the legislation has not always been complied, the struggle has been for transgender women to recognize the same legal rights as cisgender women. The project to include transgender women in the protection of the Maria da Penha law, for example, was only approved by the Brazilian Senate in 2019 (Available at: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2019/05/22/mulheres-transgenero-e-transexuais-poderao-ter-protacao-da-lei-maria-da-penha-aprova-ccj>. Accessed on: January 6th 2020). It is also worth adding that, despite the approval of PEC 75/2019, which makes femicide an imprescriptible and unreliable crime, (Available at: <https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/materias/-/materia/136775>. Accessed on: January 6th 2020), a current survey by the Observatory of Women against Violence (2019) still deals with this violence in terms of "aggressions inflicted on people from *female sex*" (emphasis added). This survey, although it points to the perception of an increase in episodes of aggression, does not, at any time, address the issue of femicide (Available at: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/institucional/datasenado/arquivos/violencia-contra-a-mulher-agressoes-cometidas-por-2018ex2019-aumentam-quase-3-vezes-em-8-anos-1>. Accessed on: January 6th 2020).

per day in the country⁵. According to the *Gender Violence Map*⁶, in 2017, approximately 67% of the people who were physically assaulted and 89% of those who suffered rape in Brazil were women. According to the Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security (2019, p. 111), “since the [femicide] law exists, cases of femicide have risen 62.7%” in Brazil⁷.

In Rio Grande do Sul, according to the *Violence Map*⁸, in 2015, there were 99 femicides, being the State with the most occurrences of this crime. This number rose to 117 in 2018 with the State being among the three with the most occurrences. Moreover, in the State, which ranks 14th in the national ranking among the most violent for women, according to the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP), between 2013 and 2016, attempts at femicide increased from 229 to 263. In 2019, cases of femicide reached 100, whereas those of attempted femicide were 359⁹. These statistics allow one to see how much the patriarchal socio-historical structure, which disseminates and consolidates violence against women, is present, either silently or explicitly.

Based on this scenario this research inserted in the project “Discourse, power and policies of (in)visibility”, focuses on the problem of violence against women, more specifically the news of (attempted) femicide, in journalistic discourse. Still consisting of a subject little debated in traditional media, femicide can also be considered a violation of Human Rights being the most atrocious crime against the feminine condition. As far as the field of Communication is concerned the research shares the increasingly necessary interest in problematizing the “notion of dominant journalistic objectivity and its relations with the prevalence of machismo and racism in the structures of journalistic knowledge production”, according to Moraes and Veiga da Silva¹⁰ (2019, p. 3). Furthermore, affiliated with the discursive perspective, the study starts from the questioning of the truth effects produced by journalism, as a discourse that works socially from hierarchically dissymmetric power relations (FOUCAULT, 1999, 2010). Such relationships are inscribed in discursive formations, crossed by “hegemonic social values, unconsciously triggered in the processes of reading reality as part of the cultural baggage of knowledge of journalists and the intrinsic relationship with the culture of which they are part”¹¹ (VEIGA DA SILVA, 2014, p. 17).

5 The data comes from the Violence Map 2015 - Homicides of Women (Available at: http://www.mapadaviolencia.org.br/pdf2015/MapaViolencia_2015_mulheres.pdf. Accessed on: January 6th 2020). It is important to emphasize that it is not always possible to accurately survey historical series on femicide. In the case of the Violence Map, “women’s homicides” do not necessarily mean femicides, since this specification, in the occurrence reports of the Civil Police of Rio Grande do Sul only began to be required from January 1, 2018. Thus, the increase in the number of femicides may indicate that more crimes began to be characterized as such and not necessarily that more women were murdered due to their gender condition.

6 Available at: <https://mapadaviolenciadegenero.com.br/>. Accessed on: January 6th 2020.

7 Available at: http://www.forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Anuario-2019-FINAL_21.10.19.pdf. Accessed on: January 6th 2020.

8 Available at: http://especiais.g1.globo.com/monitor-da-violencia/2018/femicidios-no-brasil/?_ga=2.136844855.661622359.1578322766-789815007.1571228900. Accessed on: January 6th 2020.

9 Available at: <https://ssp.rs.gov.br/indicadores-da-violencia-contra-a-mulher>. Accessed on: January 6th 2020.

10 Original: “*noção de objetividade jornalística dominante e suas relações com a prevalência do machismo e do racismo nas estruturas de produção do conhecimento jornalístico*”.

11 Original: “*valores sociais hegemônicos, acionados inconscientemente nos processos de leitura da realidade como parte da bagagem cultural de conhecimentos dos jornalistas e da intrínseca relação com a cultura da qual são parte*”.

These values are seen when it comes to the news value linked to the ideological and economic fields (TRAQUINA, 2004) of the events constructed in the analyzed texts.

The corpus of the study was anchored in the most visible portals in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and the digital medium was chosen because it allows a greater circulation of news which consequently allows different audiences to be reached, while the printed newspaper is limited to a more restricted circulation. The choice of online portals G1 and Gaúcha ZH is due to the fact that they are the main news portals of the country and of/about the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The Globo Group, to which G1 belongs and of which RBS Group is a subsidiary is characterized as one of the largest Brazilian telecommunications groups and since 2015 has seen its audience increase in the digital environment. This number was a record high in 2018 reaching more than 100 million internet users¹². In 2019, the Gaúcha ZH portal obtained 89,716 subscribers, a 47% increase over the previous year.

The analysis of this article focuses on a sample from an archive of 18 news items on femicide or attempted femicide, published between January and December 2015, and is dedicated to problematize, in four newspaper headlines, how femicide is presented to readers and how the (in)visibility of these victims is constructed, a paradox marked on the body. The selection of the sample was due to a discursive regularity in the headlines: when femicide is reported, it is on the body that not only violence is focused, but also the focus is on the news headlines, which emphasize crimes committed with cold weapons. The four headlines chosen for discussion in this article are therefore illustrative of this recurrence¹³, which marks the corpus of the research and allows one to discuss not only the violence against women but also the way in which journalism constructs a scene of (in)visibility, showing the victim and, at the same time, silencing her, by the emphasis given to the crime or by the look turned merely to her reified body.

The functioning of Discourse Analysis as a theoretical-methodological apparatus is due to the fact that it allows one to think of the senses as effects, in discourse as “an object of investigation that constitutes conflicts proper to the existence of everything that has social life”¹⁴ (FERNANDES, 2007, p. 15) and in ideology as a mechanism of producing evidence (ORLANDI, 2009). Furthermore, Discourse Analysis allows a critical reflection on journalistic production, as it presupposes that the journalist assumes the role of analyst in the stories of daily life and producer of a memory and a history of the present (GREGOLIN, 2007). Considering that language is not transparent and, consequently, that journalistic writing will always be destined to a discursive and ideological insertion, for Discourse Analysis, all textual productions are inscribed in discursive processes, of which language

12 Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/economia/midia-e-marketing/noticia/2018/11/26/grupo-globo-bate-recorde-de-acessos-no-digital-e-passa-de-100-milhoes-de-usuarios-unicos.ghtml>. Accessed on: January 11th 2020.

13 Other headlines may also be mentioned, such as “Man gets arrested after killing girlfriend with machete blows” (Diário Gaúcho Newspaper, 02/08/2015), “Suspected of stabbing ex-wife in Guaíba had already stabbed another woman six years ago” (Diário Gaúcho, 09/07/2015), “Elderly caregiver gets stabbed to death by former partner in RS” (G1, 13/09/2015), “RS city secretary stabs former wife and gets arrested; watch the video” (G1, 21 dec. 2015).

14 Original: “*um objeto de investigação que se constitui de conflitos próprios à existência de tudo que tem vida social*”.

is the basis; processes that tell of the historical production of the senses through gestures of interpretation.

This article develops and articulates, initially, the notions of (in)visibility (VOIROL, 2005, AUBERT; HAROCHE, 2013) and of silencing (ORLANDI, 2007), in order to think about the way both act in the production of news and, consequently, in the rendering invisible victims of femicide. Next, a gesture of interpretation is presented on the selected cutout.

The production of (in)visibility and silencing in journalistic discourse

In dealing with the notion of invisibility, Aubert and Haroche (2011, p. 7) argue that today “the invisible tends to mean the insignificant, and more, the non-existent”¹⁵. This statement, which seems to redeem a popular saying, “what/who is not seen, is not remembered”, can be confirmed with a simple observation in daily relations and in people’s interests of reading/writing/access in the media. If at one time the public and private spheres presented themselves with greater distance, nowadays this is no longer the case, as the demand for visibility causes the existence to be meshed by the sheer quantity of images, videos and texts produced, which impels people to exhibit them frequently. Still according to Aubert and Haroche (2011, p. 9), this demand for visibility seeks an extension of the “outer self” and a reduction of the “inner self”, which always results in becoming public. Against the fear of non-existence, the contemporary human being shows and means himself in and through the media, since “the sense of self is then less constrained by the universe of immediate experiences than nourished by multiple mediatized symbolic forms”¹⁶ (VOIROL, 2005, p. 97).

Media visibility has thus become of extreme importance in daily life, leading the population to (re)produce senses by means of symbolic apparatuses that are proposed to and often imposed on the public, even without their practical knowledge or immediate consent. This visibility also allows the interaction and thus the creation of different points of view, looking at the same symbolic basis. In this regard, Voirol (2005, p. 99) states that

It is also necessary to conceive the media scene as a space where actors can leave the invisibility and exist in the eyes of others without really getting in touch with them. Thus, they can affirm their point of view, their normative orientations, their cultural preferences, in a scene of indirect relations where they know they exist for others¹⁷.

15 Original: “*L’invisible tendant dans notre société à signifier l’insignifiant, et au-delà l’inexistant*”.

16 Original: “*le sens de soi est alors moins contraint par l’univers d’expériences immédiat et davantage nourri par de multiples formes symboliques médiatisés*”.

17 Original: “*C’est donc aussi qu’il faut concevoir la scène médiatisée comme un espace où les acteurs peuvent sortir de l’invisibilité et exister aux yeux des autres sans entrer concrètement en contact avec eux. Ainsi peuvent-ils faire valoir leur point de vue, leurs orientations normatives, leurs préférences culturelles, sur une scène de relation indirectes où ils savent qu’ils existent pour autrui*”.

However, those who do not participate in this media visibility, whatever the reason, tend to remain invisible and on the fringes of public attention, which means that the visibility scene both includes and excludes. This (in)visibility can be observed, for example, in the way journalistic productions such as news are built, since reporting, informing, showing, does not always produce an accurate representation of what (or who) is reported or shown. In this scene, information professionals have the power to choose what will be reported, but they are inserted in certain production conditions, in which economic, social, cultural and ideological criteria prevail, which define, for example, the news value of events. The fact that the producers of information choose what is worthy of appearing (and how it should appear) can, at the same time, annul/silence what is not shown, making it invisible to the public, but also negatively construct a scene of visibility on what is shown.

In building the daily reality for the readers, the journalistic discourse does not dispense with gestures of interpretation, since the producer of the news is, above all, also a reader who interprets, but never freely. In order to function as a credible and reliable discourse (NAVARRO, 2006), the journalistic discourse makes use of scripts, textual patterns and genres, more or less fixed and predetermined structures. In the case of news, there is no way of ignoring the importance of these structures to the construction of the scene to be shown, so that the “hierarchy of places and people, an objective news criterion, has overcome the magnitude and number of people involved because those who die - and where they die - are issues most valued by journalism and its exclusionary objectivity”¹⁸ (MORAES; VEIGA DA SILVA, 2019, p. 9). In relation to the headlines on (attempt) femicides, as will be pointed out in more detail in the analysis, there is a recurrence in the way the victim is constructed, presenting her shattered body, the weapon and the motivation for the crime. In this way, the construction of a visible scene around the way a woman is killed would supposedly interest the public more than the denunciation of “one more” femicide. In the face of this, the economic dimension of journalism appears in a way to attract more clicks or views, thus generating more income for the portal, at the same time as its ideological dimension manifests itself in the construction of women as victims, worthy of public attention only as bodies on which violence is focused. Thus, a sphere of information standardization is created, according to Voirol (2005, p. 107),

because the media channels, to a large extent, access the visibility scene and selects what is worthy of media coverage. While participating in the constitution of the categories from which a common experience takes shape, they impose standardized forms of representation in which actors and statements must be registered to appear. But they also help delimit the spectrum of media visibility by excluding what is not worthy of public attention¹⁹.

¹⁸ Original: “*hierarquia de lugares e pessoas, critério noticioso objetivo, venceu a magnitude e o número de envolvidos porque quem morre – e onde morre – são questões mais valorizadas pelo jornalismo e sua objetividade excludente*”.

¹⁹ Original: “*Car les médias de communication canalisent en grande partie l'accès à la scène de visibilité et procèdent à une sélection de ce qui est digne de médiatisation. En même temps qu'ils participent à la constitution des catégories partir desquelles prend forme une*

In journalism, visibility is built through journalistic production as a collective action, so that, still according to the author, the producers of (in)visibility,

Being institutions of selection, formatting and hierarchy of statements intended for the public, they allow the availability of these statements in various universes of reception and play the role not only of “gatekeeper”, but also of formatting and construction of discursive realities (VOIROL, 2005, p. 92)²⁰.

In this way, the remarkable facts are not only those that most deserve the public’s attention, but those that, among several pieces of information, were built as a reality to be seen, probably, by the social, historical, political, cultural and ideological identification of communication professionals. These, according to Voirol (2005, p. 102), “before sending their products to editorial teams, operate a form of censorship in the construction of the narrative, keeping only what is considered by them to be worthy of attention”²¹. Such censorship, defined by Orlandi (2007) as local silencing, can be related to the fact that what is not considered “appropriate to the productive routines and canons of professional culture” ends up not becoming “the public existence of news”²², according to Moraes and Veiga da Silva (2019, p. 16). Thus, the various choices concerning the way in which a story is portrayed/written influence the production of silencing or (in)visibility. However, communication professionals, editorial teams and other decision-making positions that define these canons still validate themselves in patriarchal values, linked to dominant discursive and ideological formations, so that, despite the “conquests achieved by women, in the plan of values of Western culture, and the Brazilian one in particular, the feminine and not only women are still put in unequal condition in relation to what was socially agreed as masculine”²³ (VEIGA DA SILVA, 2014, p. 50-51).

Therefore, in its way of functioning and acting in power relations, the journalistic discourse still contributes to the permanence of this normative pattern, often reinforcing stereotypes, by producing or influencing opinions and disseminating knowledge to the public. According to Louro (1997, p. 88), “these institutions and practices not only ‘manufacture’ the subjects, but are themselves produced by gender representations, as well as by ethnic, sexual,

expérience commune, ils imposent des formes standardisées de représentation dans lesquelles les acteurs et les énoncés doivent s’inscrire pour apparaître. Mais ils contribuent également à délimiter le spectre de la visibilité médiatisée en excluant ce qui ne leur est pas digne d’attention publique”.

20 Original: “Car ce sont des institutions de sélection, de mise en forme et de hiérarchisation des énoncés destinés au public. Elles rendent possible la disponibilité de ces énoncés dans des univers de réception démultipliés et jouent le rôle non seulement de « gatekeeper » mais aussi de formatage et de construction des réalités discursives”.

21 Original: “avant de soumettre leurs produits aux équipes de rédaction, opèrent une forme de censure dans la mise en récit, ne retenant que ce qui est considéré par eux comme digne d’attention”.

22 Original: “adequado às rotinas produtivas e aos cânones da cultura profissional” [...] “a existência pública de notícia”.

23 Original: “conquistas alcançadas pelas mulheres, no plano de valores da cultura Ocidental, e da brasileira em especial, o feminino e não apenas as mulheres ainda é posto em condição desigual em relação ao que se convencionou socialmente como masculino”.

class representations etc.”²⁴. This implies that, in the routine of journalistic production, even journalists belonging to social minorities²⁵ can contribute so that excluding, stereotyped or prejudiced practices remain unquestioned. In other terms, if the (news)values are linked to hegemonic social positions, put into action more or less unconsciously and intrinsically related to socio-historical-cultural aspects (in dialogue with the thought of Veiga da Silva, 2014, previously mentioned), then the questioning (or not) of the canons already solidified in the field of journalism concerns less the individual (as a bio-psychic-social organism) than the subject (as a socio-historical position assumed in discourse). This is because, according to the discursive perspective, an individual is not at the origin of the sayings or the senses (s)he produces, given that (s)he assumes positions in the discourse, joining the discursive formations that determine what and how to say. Such discursive formations are fields of shared knowledge, domains of socially solidified memories and discourses. It is these different discursive formations that cross the subject and determine, in large part, his/her speech and its effects.

Thus, despite the conquests achieved by women, as pointed out by Veiga da Silva (2014), such transformations are not always visible in the power relations between masculine and feminine places, which remain dissymmetric. In this sense, Foucault’s thinking about power relations contributes to understand that the subjects are not the target of a single power, since it spreads in discursive practices, such as medicine, economics and, of course, the media. The author conceives that power relations are “a set of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in time and space, which defined, at a given time and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area, the conditions for exercising enunciative function”²⁶ (FOUCAULT, 1986, apud GREGOLIN, 2006, p. 95).

The function of the gatekeeper, from the perspective of discourse, emerges then from discursive formations, that is, from the fact that the journalist is inserted in conditions of production (historical, ideological, and economic) linked, in large part, to the bias of the vehicle in which (s)he operates. This does not mean that journalistic texts are always produced in order to hide or show, in an intentional and planned way, but that both journalists and texts work under the illusion of transparency of language and senses, as if the ways of saying were evident and have a single meaning, as if they were not historical. Therefore, power relations fall on gender relations as well, since questioning the doing of a journalistic position consists, in a way, in “reinventing” this journalistic position, frequently (and often unthinkingly) assumed. In a hierarchical framework, constituted in the Western

24 Original: “*essas instituições e práticas não somente ‘fabricam’ os sujeitos, como também são elas próprias produzidas por representações de gênero, bem como por representações étnicas, sexuais, de classe, etc.*”.

25 The notion of social minorities, here, is not characterized by a quantitative bias, since it is opposed, as a gesture of resistance, to that of social or cultural hegemony. For this reason, one understands oneself as belonging to social minorities and not to minoritized populations, although this is an increasingly frequent designation. In power relations, according to Foucault’s thinking, there is always resistance. Thus, the active position (as minorities), and not passive (as minoritized), marks this ever-present possibility of insurgency and transformation in these relationships.

26 In Portuguese: “*um conjunto de regras anônimas, históricas, sempre determinadas no tempo e no espaço, que definiram, em uma dada época e para uma determinada área social, econômica, geográfica ou linguística as condições de exercício da função enunciativa*”.

and patriarchal society, the contemporary insertion of the feminine in several areas that used to be male domain continues to be a debated question, mainly about the means and working conditions in which one acts, but also about the possibility of displacement and deconstruction of ingrained practices.

This makes leads the reflection that, as far as the media (in)visibility scenario is concerned, it is still necessary to study, discuss and analyze the way gender relations are conducted. As a result of solidified procedures of selection, silencing and exclusion, the claim for visibility, seen positively as representativeness, occupies central space in the various struggles of social groups, of which the feminist, LGBT+ and human rights movements are examples of it. It is not only a matter of being shown, but of being recognized in the media, so that, by reaching the formation of public opinion, one can take part in the political power that the media can offer.

If the (in)visibility scenes are produced in discursive and ideological formations with which journalists (and readers) identify and which produce, for them, effects of evidence and naturalization, the accurate analysis of these scenes does not stem from gestures of reading (ORLANDI, 2007), commonly made by the discourse analyst, but equally possible for the attentive reader and the journalist who devotes himself to problematize his own practice. This problematization has been more and more frequent in the current scenario, where the struggle for visibility over femicides in newspapers is recurrent and necessary, since several cases are not named as such, but described only as crimes of passion and honor, characterized by jealousy. According to Law 13,104/2015, femicide is a “qualifying circumstance of the crime of homicide” and must be understood as a “heinous crime”, that is, it must be included in the list of the most serious crimes, which arouse more aversion and, consequently, must be fought. Femicide is also characterized, according to the text of the law, by crimes “against women for reasons of their gender status”²⁷ and/or involving “domestic and family violence” and “contempt or discrimination against the status of women” (BRASIL, 2015).

Seeking, as journalists, to give a voice to these causes implies considering the importance of analyzing, for a given issue, not only what is said but also why it is said in a certain way and not in others. In other words, more than the process of producing the news, the process of reflecting on this practice should allow one to understand, according to Foucault (2009, p. 30), that “the description of events in the discourse poses another very different question: how did one particular statement appear, and not another in its place?”²⁸.

This task, as far as power and gender relations are concerned, should of course not only be for women journalists or researchers in this field. In journalism, more specifically in constructionist theories, the news is recognized as a social construction, marked by the social agents that produce it. Feminist and queer studies, especially since the 1990s, have

27 The text of the law, in Brazilian Portuguese, associates the crime of femicide with the “female sex”, which makes it difficult for femicide against transgender women, for example, to be typified as such.

28 Original : “*La description des événements du discours pose une tout autre question : comment se fait-il que tel énoncé soit apparu et nul autre à sa place ?*”.

brought to the field the possibility of questioning these constructions and the power relations in society; relations already studied by Foucault (1999, 2009, 2010) both in the production of knowledge and truths and linked to the subjects' socio-historical conditions, as well as the organization and discipline of their bodies by a visible logic, which provides elements to understand and problematize the media devices in action. Therefore, gender, beyond the bodies and the materialized discourses, is “a constitutive element of social relations based on the differences perceived between the sexes and considered the first way to give meaning to power relations”²⁹ (SCOTT, 1990, p. 14 apud VEIGA DA SILVA, 2014, p. 49). In other words, the genders are not just the categories of female and male, but are ways of establishing and maintaining power relations. Like gender, most forms of power exercise fall on the body, and more so on the body associated with the feminine.

In this study, as previously announced, the focus of the analysis is on how these victims, at the same time, have their bodies exposed and their condition silenced. The body, then, is inserted in this media discourse and, according to Foucaultian thought, consists of one of the ways of exercising control over individuals in society. In the headlines analyzed below, the body in question refers to women (young and old) and children who are easily reported as bodies susceptible to power effects, because they are historically and socially seen as fragile, submissive and more vulnerable to suffering and violence (SARTI, 2009).

For Foucault (2010), the discipline and control of the human body are characterized as a way of exercising power relations, which are established in the mechanisms of life to the point where they become invisible, naturalized and impregnated in society and daily life. In the cases of femicide and especially in the news about these cases, it is about a discursive construction of the victim's body; a construction that produces a visibility of this body, but only as a simple body, reified, passive, body-news; not as a form of visibility/representativity of the feminine condition.

In the media discourse, mainly journalistic, as in the case of the news whose headlines are analyzed, this body, seen as fragile, suffers a double attack, first as a target of femicide and then as a target of journalistic practice that elects it as showable, news-worthy, worthy of spectacle. The power relations, thus, materialize in the body, submitting it to the condition of victim in which signs of violence are drawn, traced by hand; a violence that, daily, produces new victims.

Body and (in)visibility

In the discursive perspective, as well as language, silence is also not transparent and its opacity must be considered as a mechanism belonging to a set of discursive practices that produce (in)visibility, especially in written and online media, which occupy an increasing space due to the development of the Internet in recent times. When femicide

²⁹ In Portuguese: “um elemento constitutivo de relações sociais fundadas sobre as diferenças percebidas entre os sexos e considerado o primeiro modo de dar significado às relações de poder”.

news are published in news portals, its repercussion is usually greater than if they were aired on television or in printed newspapers, for example. This mode of circulation of the journalistic discourse also contributes to the production of senses and to the (in)visibility of news and victims.

The corpus for this analysis, as mentioned in the introduction, consists of four headlines, cut out from online news portals, which were published in the second half of 2015, the year in which the Femicide Law was sanctioned. For this purpose, Discourse Analysis is approached as an analytical device in the procedures of cutout and discussion of the enunciates, the notion of cutout being defined by Orlandi (1984, p. 14) as “correlated fragments of language”³⁰, that is, the selection of fragments and, in the case of this research, excerpts of news (headlines) on (attempt) femicides in which the journalistic discourse is materialized. The notion of enunciate is characterized as “that produced by the very fact of having been enunciated”³¹ (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 110), that is, it is not the act of speech, writing or the intention of the individual, but the conditions of production that the enunciate implies (FOUCAULT, 1995) and its meaning effects. From the theoretical-methodological perspective of Discourse Analysis, these headlines are cutouts that meet the objective of the research and, as part of its theoretical-analytical device, are considered discursive sequences (SD). The set of these titles produces a textuality in itself; escaping from the scope of this discussion, although necessary for a broader analysis, the punctual relationship between the headlines and the news texts (attached). The first SD is presented below:

Figure 1 – SD1³²



Source: Gaúcha ZH.

The crime described in SD1 occurred in the city of Caxias do Sul, where, as the news reports, the victims were found. The grandmother was killed with 20 stab wounds and the granddaughter showed signs of beheading, in addition to ten stab wounds to the back.

30 Original: “*fragmentos correlacionados de linguagem*”.

31 Original: «*ce qui s’est produit par le fait même qu’il y a eu énoncé*».

32 The headline is “Brutality in Serra - Grandma and granddaughter of only 2 years old are stabbed inside the house” (Gaúcha ZH, 30 nov. 2015).

The news text adds that the murder site showed no signs of forced entry, which led the case officer to say that the perpetrator must have been someone known and that he acted as a “passionate motivator”. The news also adds that the woman/victim intended to leave the city, as a possible justification for the case.

In the headline in SD1, the passive voice is used, which gives more emphasis to those suffering the action. The order presented to the reader aims to answer who the victims are, how and where the crime occurred, but it does not talk about who would have committed it. It is also noted that the most important thing is to know what happened, the fact, as traditional journalism dictates. In this case, the victims appear as an element of the spectacularization of violence described in SD1, “Brutality in Mountain Range”, used to draw the reader’s attention. This hypervisibility of violence indicates that the purpose of the title seems not to denounce an atrocious crime, but to (re)create a brutal scene that both repels and incites the gaze. To this end, the use of verbal tense in the present, in “are stabbed” (and not “were stabbed”), contributes to the impression that the crime happens the instant the headline is read. As one knows, the present is the time of journalistic writing and imprisoned by this evidence the producers of information/news (who do not question themselves about the effects of this naturalized practice) or follow the script, or reaffirm it, exactly as a form of (re)inscription in a discursive mechanism submitted to economic criteria (of the saleable or consumable news), according to Traquina (2004).

The situation of the victims, conditioned by their vulnerability, because they are a grandmother and a child *of only two years old* puts them in the focus of the scene, and the lexical element “only” is in charge of reinforcing the moving aspect of the news; an aspect perhaps expected by both reader-journalists and reader-spectators. However, since no information is reported about who committed or is suspected of having committed the crime, these victims appear as “victims of circumstances” (SARTI, 2018), who, although at home³³, supposedly protected, tragically ended up dead; they “are stabbed”, as if the crime (given the sentence structure, with undetermined subject) had no agent. The same occurs in SD2:

33 As the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (2019, p. 113) points out, “In the records where it is possible to identify where the woman was murdered, 65.6% [of femicide crimes] happened at home”.

Figure 2 – SD2³⁴

08/08/2015 08h52 - Atualizado em 08/08/2015 13h51

Três mulheres e uma criança são degoladas em Porto Alegre, RS

A polícia identificou sinais de luta corporal e um princípio de incêndio.
Menino de seis anos foi encontrado entre as vítimas da mesma família.

Source: Gaúcha ZH.

The news headline highlights that the victims, in addition to having signs of beheading, had knife punctures through their bodies. According to the news, the investigation indicates that there were signs of a body struggle and concealment of evidence of a started fire. The crime would also have been for “passionate motive”³⁵, committed by an ex-partner of one of the murdered women, not resigned to the end of the relationship. However, the police would not have confirmed this hypothesis.

The similarity between SD1 and SD2 headlines lies both in the reaffirmation of the brutality of crime, the vulnerability of victims and the manner in which they are injured, and the structure expressed in linguistic materiality, that is, the voice in which the title is written. The headline of SD2 is not structurally distant from the previous headline, because in both, the passive voice gives more visibility (from the parallelism of verbal forms “they are stabbed” and “they are beheaded”), to what has occurred, to who has suffered the action and to the verbal time that seems to eternalize or always repeat the present. The segmentation and enumeration of the victims – “grandmother and granddaughter” in SD1, “three women and a child” in SD2 - call for a greater commotion than if they were only two or three people. Mainly because there is a child murdered, the title moves the public more, motivating them to know that he was brutally killed. The production of awareness as a possible meaning effect allows the questioning of the news value in the headline: in economic terms, the emphasis on the presence (of the body) of the child among the victims may suggest that, if he or she did not have space there, the news would not have the same reach in the accesses nor the same impact. In ideological terms, while it may sensitize readers, the emphasis on the child body may suggest that a crime committed only against women would not be as “condemnable” as the crime committed against a child, who “would have done nothing

34 The headline is “Three women and a child are beheaded in Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil The police identified signs of a struggle and a fire outbreak. Six-year-old boy was found among the victims of the same family” (Gaúcha ZH, 8 aug. 2015).

35 Also according to the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook (2019, p. 113), “many of the cases of femicide recorded in recent years and published in the press dealt with women who sought separation from the aggressor. According to the Guidelines for investigating, prosecuting and judging women violent deaths from a gender perspective, the feeling of possession and control over the body and autonomy of women are structural conditions for violent deaths of women for gender reasons”.

to deserve it”, according to a recurring logic of great social splendor, that the woman who suffers violence would have had a reason to deserve it.

Another pertinent question that moves this analysis is the way the body appears. In this shattered body, built by the passive voice of the headline, “the human aspect of the victim seems completely emptied: it is just news”³⁶ (CORACINI, 2014, p. 106). In the headlines, both in SD1 and SD2, it is highlighted not only that the body, passive, has suffered violence, but it is described what the violence is: the body is “stabbed” and “beheaded”. These supposed forms of punishment suggest that the perpetrators of the two crimes needed, in some way, to sign their deeds, obeying the logic of “a social configuration of gender relations that entangles them in violent relations. It makes them aggressors and agents of violence, forcing them to proof of masculinity”³⁷ (SARTI, 2009, p. 97) and of power over decision making, as in the SD2 headline, where the woman, according to the news, no longer accepted the relationship.

This power relation also falls on the body, since in it “an economic and political relation is exercised, it can be understood that the usefulness of the body is linked to a relation of productivity and submission”³⁸ (MELO, 2016, p. 64). Submission of the victim is also evident in the following headlines.

Figure 3 – SD3³⁹

03/08/2015 | 13h12

Homem decepa mãos e um pé da companheira e alega legítima defesa

Jovem agredida está em estado grave no Hospital Centenário. Agressor foi autuado por tentativa de homicídio

Source: Gaúcha ZH.

The attempt at femicide described in the SD3 headline occurred in São Leopoldo, in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre. The aggressor was the victim’s ex-boyfriend and went to the police station to turn himself in and admit that he had assaulted his partner with a machete after an argument. The gravity of the aggression is built, in the news, when one describes the reaction of the policemen (by the verbal choice, in “they were surprised”,

36 Original: “o aspecto humano da vítima parece completamente esvaziado: trata-se apenas de uma notícia”.

37 Original: “de uma configuração social das relações de gênero que os enreda em relações violentas. Torna-os agressores e agentes da violência, forçando-os a provas de masculinidade”.

38 Original: “uma relação econômica e política, pode-se depreender que a utilidade do corpo vincula-se a uma relação de produtividade e submissão”.

39 The headline is “Man cuts off hands and one foot from his companion and pleads self-defense. Young woman assaulted is in serious condition at the Centennial Hospital. The aggressor was charged with attempted homicide” (Gaúcha ZH, 03 aug. 2015).

and by the adjective, in “astonished”) when the responsible admits to having amputated the hands and one of the victim’s feet. The text of the news (attached) also astonishes the reader, presenting the shattering of the body: the enunciation “cuts off hands and one foot from his companion” in the headline, is reinforced in the news by “she was hit on the head, legs and belly”.

However, the mechanism calling for public support is distinguished from SD1 and SD2. SD3 is structured by active voice which is the way used for the sentence to be clear and direct. Thus, it is clear what happened, who suffered and, especially, who committed the action. It draws the reader’s attention, however, to the final part of the title, which both breaks the expected line of senses and reinforces the gravity of the crime: “and pleads self-defense”. The verb *to plead*, in the referred expression and inserted in the legal terminology, implies the presentation of facts, arguments and reasons to “be taken to act” in a certain way, that is, it is a matter of seeking a plausible (and acceptable) justification for the violence practiced. Furthermore, by the same reference to legal discourse, this verb that conjugate state and action also shows a position taken by the journalist, because when one asks “why was it said in such a way and not in another?”, one realizes that the verb could be replaced by “to say”, for example, that it sounds more “neutral”. The information could also not be mentioned in the headline.

The text of the news, however, far from seeking exemption or neutrality (idealized but impossible), names the aggressor, who “was fined for attempted homicide” and supposedly mentions his voice in direct quotation: he “was tired of this situation”. When the aggressor is shown and judgment is made on his justification, by means of the verb to plead, which sounds ironic given the gravity of the aggression described, it helps to construct an image of the aggressor as being responsible for the crime (and not the victim, as the news often ends up suggesting).

The axiological weight that this verb carries, historically, suggests that the journalist exposes a possible position on the case, because, besides reporting the fact, one adds that, after the attempt at femicide, the man wanted to justify himself, as if the action he committed could be justified, according to his words in the news, by a supposed violence that he had been suffering and of which he was already tired. The (in)visibility, paradoxically, occurs at that very moment, when one knows more about who the defendant is (giving him a voice in the news, whether this is an ironic choice or not). Of the woman, it is known about her body: young, 22 years old, hands and feet severed, hit on the head, legs and belly, in a serious state, with no possibility of reimplantation of the limbs, submitted to surgery. The crime she suffered is called by the most generic term, attempted homicide, and not, by the qualifying circumstance, attempted femicide, although it can be characterized by “domestic and family violence” (BRASIL, 2015).

In view of this, the social duty of the journalist increases, so that neither the (in) visibility of the victim in the constructed scene nor the construction of this scene according to traditional and often thoughtless patterns occurs. Naming femicide any crime in which

women are victims may sound accusing, and journalism must take into consideration the principle of presumption of innocence, but not calling some crimes femicide is also questionable in terms of ethics and social responsibility of journalism. Not denouncing a heinous crime as such should in the least lead one to reflect on how the news is produced.

This way *apparently* more committed to its social role, can be analyzed in the SD4 headline below.

Figure 4 – SD4⁴⁰



Fonte: Gaúcha ZH.

Unlike the other SD analyzed, in SD4 the victim’s name is mentioned, as is the fact that she is the mother of an 11-month-old girl and works in a shoe store. Of the four SD analyzed, this is the only one whose news text (d)enunciates the crime of femicide: “This is the sixth femicide this year in Pelotas”. In addition, information that guides the reader’s gaze is highlighted in bold throughout the news (attached), among them: “24 stab wounds”, “I had just bought the knife”, “the couple has a daughter” and “the man did not accept the end of the relationship”.

As in the previous headline, in SD4 the agent becomes visible, who suffers the action and, what’s more, who talks about the crime. It is through the authorized talk of the investigation that the femicide is denounced and that the visibility scene is built from the title of the news. Thus, in analyzing SD4 in relation to SD1, one perceives a different tone given to the case, in the sense that the femicide and its perpetrator are exposed, incurring less in the barbaric details of the crime and in the body that suffered it and more in the expert opinion. Although the manner in which the murder was committed and the number of stab wounds against the victim are pointed out it is on the social construction of his image as mother, woman and worker that the news seems to focus.

Although at first sight SD4 can be taken as more “respectful” of the feminine condition, since it gives less emphasis to the reification of the body, presented only as

40 The headline is “Expertise indicates that young woman killed by her ex-husband in Pelotas took 24 stab wounds. Caroline dos Santos Ramires, 21, had an 11-month-old daughter with the offender” (Gaúcha ZH, 14/12/2019).

young, it is possible to perceive the construction of an image of the woman who should not suffer violence, that is, the woman who occupies her place in work relations and fulfills her role within the family, investing her body in these relations “of productivity and submission” (MELO, 2016, p. 64). As with the previous SD, the presence of the child element, associated with the emphasis on motherhood, in the subtitle of the headline, produces, as the main meaning effect, the commotion of the readers, who could supposedly see the woman as a “real” victim, to the detriment of other women “less worthy” of a place in society and in the news, as well as “more deserving” of violence. In these headlines, the woman who works, has children and/or takes care of her grandchildren represents the women whose murder should be reported, shown - but not necessarily denounced as femicide - which is far from representativeness, in fact, when it comes to violence directed to the feminine condition.

According to the Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security (2019, p. 111), for example, there is a “greater vulnerability of black women: they are 61% of the victims [of femicide]”, however, this female condition is silenced in the news. Likewise, the condition of social class and schooling is not usually highlighted, although more than 70% of victims of violence have attended only elementary school. In addition, despite the fact that Brazil is the leader in the world ranking of transgender murders, according to *Transgender Europe*, the first transgender women murder recorded as femicide occurred in São Paulo only in 2019⁴¹, four years after the sanctioning of the law 13,104 / 2015. It is in this sense that, as previously pointed out, the choice of what should appear (and how it should appear) builds a scene of visibility in which the feminine condition is either summed up in the woman’s body or is linked to a representation/image already given, according to patriarchal moral standards, of what it is to be a woman. This scene, at the same time, silences other women who also suffer violence, but do not fit into the canonical construction of the “real” woman or the “real” victim, which would enable the production of “good” news.

It is noted that, unlike the headlines discussed in SD1 and SD2, in which the agent is not identified (the subject of the phrase remains undetermined), in SD3 and SD4, by the choice of lexical elements, it is described not only who was the victim and where the crime occurred, but also who committed it: man and the aggressor (in SD3) and ex-husband and the offender (in SD4). However, to a greater or lesser degree, in all the headlines analyzed, the violence practiced is projected on the body of the victim of femicide. This body suffers violence again, when placed in the news, because the violated body in the headline is what “sells the most”, drawing the public’s attention to the fact and, consequently, to the vehicle.

The body of the victims then becomes naturalized as an object or showcase of violence and of a certain mode of journalistic production that does not dissociate itself from the modes of social relationship, inscribed in power relations. These relations, according to

41 Available at: <https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/sp-registra-morte-de-trans-como-feminicidio-pela-primeira-vez-mas-visibilidade-do-crime-ainda-desafio-23709616>. Access in: January 7th 2020.

Foucault (1999), affect the body and subject it to a regime of discursive practices, to a device of saying that circumscribes it, to a violence that is not enclosed in the actions of those who practice it physically, because it persists, mainly, in the choices of those who, linguistically and discursively, reproduce it in the daily news. For Foucault (1999, p. 28), “it is always the body that is dealt with, the body and its forces, its usefulness and docility, its distribution and its submission”⁴²; the body, in the news, suffers violence twice over, because it is not respected even after death, when it is wide open, disfigured, so as to fit in what is expected or insisted upon in the headlines.

Conclusion

Through the functioning of its discourse, journalism builds and provides visibility, inserting itself in the dispute for the notion of truth. Before the apparatus of digital technology, journalism was given the place of truth holder; almost nobody questioned it, because few knew how the information reached the television screen or even the newspaper pages. With the expansion of the Internet and digital media, information began to be reported more and more quickly, often without questioning the quality of the final product, although today one can check whether a newspaper is doing its work in an ethical and socially responsible manner.

Although it is no longer seen as a place of production of absolute truths, the power that journalistic discourse still holds can contribute both to foster and to silence the debate on the modes of oppression and (dis)construction of social reality, in which, mainly, cases of crimes against women are weighed. Thus, to reflect critically on the formulation and circulation of the journalistic discourse in its meaning effects becomes necessary so that scenes of invisibility are not reaffirmed. These scenes, as the analysis shows, contribute to more women (and their stories on police pages) appearing as victims, subjugated, fragmented, shattered bodies.

Even if laws like the Maria da Penha Law (2006) and the Femicide Law (2015) exist, they are still recent and fragile measures compared to centuries of naturalized and institutionalized violence, including in newsrooms. In addition, it is important to highlight that violence directed at women, especially against transgender women, still occupies a lower place whether in the media field, in the number of denunciations, or in public policies put into action in a country with high rates of violence like Brazil. The recent incorporation of the National Secretariat of Policies for Women (SNPM) and the National Council of Women’s Rights to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (according to Decree 9.417, of June 20, 2018)⁴³, for example, leads to reflect not only on the constant risk of a

42 Original: «*c’est bien toujours du corps qu’il s’agit — du corps et de ses forces, de leur utilité et de leur docilité, de leur répartition et de leur soumission*».

43 Although the ministry is under a woman’s responsibility, it is known from the discursive perspective that an individual assumes different positions in the discourse; these positions are oriented due to shared ideological formations and manifest, in a more or less explicit way, in the sayings.

naturalized attachment of women to the family, silencing struggles and specific rights of women to/with public space, but also on the greater or lesser commitment of the State in fighting violence against women and in recognizing their rights.

Thus, considering these positions, it is necessary to question those assumed in the media scene and, more precisely, in the current journalistic discourse. At a time when hate crimes are on the rise, not only violence against women, but all forms of violence against social minorities need to be (d)enunciated. To report a femicide as femicide and not as “crime of passion”, to name femicide without looking for reasons the woman might have given to the attacker to commit the crime, are taken to a more and more urgent position, because many cases of femicide are either not reported or appear as homicides, without qualifying circumstance, which makes it difficult to know exact data about violence against women in the country. The emphasis given to femicides suffered by cisgender women, family mothers and workers, for example, while it should be certainly reported, also tells a lot about the mechanisms of silence and social invisibility, about how and which women enter the field of media (in)visibility, produced in the news, as “real” victims.

The analysis developed here made it possible to understand that the crimes reported could be read/analyzed in relation to their framework as crimes “against women for reasons of their gender condition”, “domestic and family violence” or “contempt or discrimination against the condition of women”. In all cases, this is a heinous crime, although the term was not part of the lexical elements that make up the news. On the contrary, in much of the headlines, instead of (d)enunciating the crime, the victim’s body is emphasized as a submissive, passive object on which strength and power are easily exercised. According to Sarti (2009), this body can be seen as a materialization of the very condition of the victim category, since

This category is delimited by the identification of some fragility in the victim’s figure: woman, child, elderly. The tendency is to recognize in the figure of the victim someone who is likely to suffer the violent act, because it corresponds to a place defined beforehand as vulnerability⁴⁴ (SARTI, 2009, p. 97).

Vulnerability in the headlines is made visible as the place of victim is constructed in a symbiotic relationship with the feminine condition. By implying that women (children, adults or the elderly) do not know or cannot defend themselves (or be defended), even within their own homes or in their workplaces, that their bodies will somehow suffer from socially established power, journalism can ease the guilt and/or hide the killer, especially by building and solidifying, in its discourse, the condition of victim tied to

⁴⁴ Original: “Esta categoria delimita-se pela identificação de alguma fragilidade na figura da vítima: mulher, criança, idoso. A tendência é reconhecer na figura da vítima alguém passível de sofrer o ato violento, por corresponder a um lugar definido de antemão como de vulnerabilidade”.

woman, whose body is a propitious place for both the manifestation of violence and the dissemination of news.

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