

Life and death in the feminine: discourses on the order of patriarchy

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1

Abstract

The cases of feminicides in Brazil are old and recurrent, and the social discourses that surround them continue to be worrisome, because they still and currently revolve around the guilt of the woman (victim). The objective of this work is to discuss how the discourses are inserted and maintained in the systems of a chauvinistic and patriarchal society that support the guilt of women. The corpus of this work is composed of comments (statements) by internet users who follow the page @anapolis.noticias_ on the social network Instagram that were published in two news stories this year. For this, we resorted to the theoretical postulates on discourse and power of the French philosopher Michel Foucault.

Keywords: Patriarchy. Power. Femicide. Culpability. Speech

Vida e morte no feminino: discursos na ordem do patriarcado

Resumo

Os casos de feminicídios no Brasil são antigos e recorrentes e os discursos sociais que os circundam continuam sendo preocupantes, pois giram, ainda e atualmente, em torno da culpabilização da mulher (vítima). O objetivo desse trabalho é discutir como os discursos estão inseridos e mantidos nos sistemas de uma sociedade machista e patriarcal que fundamenta a culpabilização da mulher. O corpus desse trabalho é composto de comentários (enunciados) por internautas seguidores da página @anapolis.noticias_ na rede social Instagram que foram veiculados em duas notícias este ano. Para isso, recorreremos aos postulados teóricos sobre discurso e poder do filósofo francês Michel Foucault.

Palavras-chave: Patriarcado. Poder. Femicídio. Culpabilização. Discurso.

1 Introduction

In 1983, the United Nations (UN) defined violence against women as "any gender-based act or conduct that causes death, harm, or physical, sexual, or psychological suffering to women, whether occurring in the public or private sphere".



The UN (1993) also states that

violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women that have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and prevent the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men [...].

2

Clearly admitted in the group of gender issues that deserve debate and study, feminicides constitute the most extreme form of gender-based violence that is exercised against women, by the desire for power, for domination, for control that represents the end of a continuum of violent acts.

Statistically the number of murders of men is higher than that of women, but while men are murdered by other men in public settings, women are murdered inside the home, in most cases by men with whom they had a marital relationship, which occurs after a long route of violence.

Crimes of femicide are politicized and mark the gender inequality present in society. Femicides have a symbolic meaning, in which violence is used to assert power over other men. Crimes at this level represent the hierarchies between men and women, maintained by the interrelation of domination/exploitation systems, namely: patriarchy, racism, and capitalism.

To speak of femicide is to speak [essentially] of male domination that, by social, historical and cultural construction, is based on the patriarchal system, in which men occupy a privileged place, while women are given a secondary role, reduced to the reproductive function and to "less noble" tasks. Patriarchy continues to be one of the structures on which contemporary societies are based, granting violence and domination that is reflected in interpersonal relationships.

Discussing the blame placed on women by society, in cases of femicide, goes a long way. A path that goes through the social construction and the power relations that construct and signify the female figure.

In this way, for the construction of this text, we analyzed the discourses reverberated in two news stories about murders that were published in Anápolis News





(@anapolis.noticias_) on the social network Instagram this year (2022). Thus, our goal is to discuss how the discourses are inserted and maintained in the systems of a sexist and patriarchal society that bases the guilt of women. For this, we resort to the theoretical postulates of the French Discourse Analysis with the studies on discourse and power of the French philosopher Michel Foucault.

3

2 Power from a Foucauldian perspective

In order to deal with femicide and patriarchy, it is important to approach the concept of power in order to understand the complexities of a system of domination that is inserted in micro and macro relations that have been going on for millennia in the history of humanity.

When we think about unequal relations, we often talk about the existence of power of one group over another, of one category over another, of one person over another. In the case of this article, it would be the power that the man has over the woman, over her body and over her life.

In this sense, about power, the philosopher Michel Foucault points out that:

Power works and exercises itself in a network. In its meshes, individuals not only circulate, but are always in a position to exercise this power and suffer its action; they are never the inert or consenting target of power, they are always centers of transmission. [...] Effectively, what makes a body, gestures, discourses, and desires to be identified and constituted as individuals is one of the first effects. The individual is an effect of power and simultaneously, or by the very fact of being an effect, is its center of transmission. Power passes through the individual that it constitutes. (FOUCAULT, 1981, p.183-184).

Thus, Michel Foucault (2015, p. 102) states that power relations are immanent to all types of relations, being "immediate effects of the shares, inequalities and imbalances that are produced in them and, reciprocally, are the internal conditions of these differentiations".

Along this line of reasoning, Jeffrey Weeks points out that "gender is not a simple analytical category; it is [...] a power relation. Thus, patterns of female sexuality are,





inescapably, a product of men's power to define what is necessary and desirable - a power historically rooted" (WEEKS, 2013,p. 56).

Michel Foucault (1986) has shown that power is much more complex than the exercise of repression and punishment. When we understand that power is also exercised in knowledge, everything that is considered as truth, that is, all knowledge is historically constructed through power relations. For example, the power of men in patriarchal society is not only in the physical domination, control, and repression of women; patriarchal power is also exercised in the belief that women are docile and gentle.

Pateman (1993) states that patriarchal power is the fundamental mediator in social relations established through the sexual contract in the modern era. According to the author, "in modern patriarchy there are a variety of means by which men maintain the terms of the sexual contract" (PATEMAN, 1993, p.279).

Pateman's approach to patriarchal power is related to the Foucauldian approach of biopower - power over bodies. According to Foucault (1993) in the 19th century modern Western capitalist society settles into the "age of biopower" (FOUCAULT, 1993, p. 132). Biopower is translated as "to make live or let die" (FOUCAULT, 1993, p. 194), and dying "can also be indirect death" (p. 207). This means that power relations are exercised through the management of life, the disciplinarization of bodies, the production of populations, "ensuring relations of domination and effects of hegemony" (p. 133). With this, sexuality becomes one of the most important devices of this power.

3 Discourses on the order of patriarchy: the guilt of women

The data that was analyzed in this article consists of comments(statements) taken from two news items that were posted on the Anápolis Notícias page on Instagram (2022). To wit:

News 1:





Figure 1 - Source: print on Instagram page @anapolis.noticias_

News 2:



Figure 2 - Source: print on Instagram page @anapolis.noticias_

After the circulation of these news on the social network, we sought to analyze the comments of the webpage's users. The first news circulated on March 6th 2022 had 319 comments, and the second, circulated on April 15th 2022, had 334 comments (until the date of our analysis).

Referring to news item 1, we highlight:

- a) These women stay with bandits, knowing that something can happen any time mercy.....
- b) Very sad indeed, these types of people have nothing to lose, they only lose those who get involved.
- c) I think that women should give more value to themselves and know with whom they are relating.
- d) I think so too, these women have a lot of trouble, only God can help them.



e) I wonder what a beautiful girl like this is going to do to get a bandit to date and marry. If the guy didn't have character with others with his wife and family he won't. May God comfort the family, and may this human (emoji of a wastebasket) stay in jail.

f) Unfortunately it's a sad reality, and another victim of that old story,

"BELIEVING THESE KIND OF VAGULAR EX PRESIDENTIALS WILL CHANGE ONE DAY"

Referring to news 2, we highlight:

(a) Absurd!!!! Absuuuurrddoooo! What right did she have to do that? Let justice be done! What pain for his mother, my friend, a wonderful person!!!!

b) Jail her, let her pay for her mistakes and there is no point in coming to defend her.

c) It is not always the man, she was psychopathic with jealousy

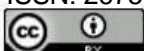
d) Her stories before were drinking beer if she hadn't been drinking maybe she would have had another attitude. Go figure neh!

e) This is what the system and the media want, to put men against women and women against men. Just the way the devil likes it!

f) We are so used to feminicides, have you ever thought that it could have been the other way around? Women don't have a profile of killing husbands but the opposite, self-defense should be investigated.

In the comments of Internet users, femicide would work as a punishment for women who do not know how to make good choices, because "those who look for them will find them". Deviant" women, because they are doing "wrong things", because "if she hadn't been drinking, maybe she would have a different attitude".

It is important to point out that part of these comments are reiterated by women. Female consent is linked to the naturalized discourses that hierarchize men and women in society, placing them in unequal power situations. These statements reinforce the





discourse of blaming the woman (victim) for the violence suffered and in this case also practiced, dictating that no matter what happened, it is always her fault, and for keeping the woman in the space that the macho and patriarchal society dictates: the home.

We noticed in the comments of the internauts, always reminding the sexist and patriarchal discourse about women, the woman who should be docile, resigned to the home. A discourse that any behavior that diverges from this would be wrong and/or inappropriate.

Comments that reinforce the view that women must behave "properly" to avoid violence. If violence occurs it is because the woman's behavior was not appropriate, when, for example, "she is psychopathic with jealousy."

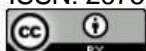
The woman's behavior remains under surveillance. Society dictates to her ways of dressing, walking, behaving, where to go and who to hang out with, reinforcing what Foucault (2004, p. 118) says that "in any society, the body is trapped inside very tight powers, which impose limitations, prohibitions, and obligations on it."

According to Medeiros and Medeiros (2016, p. 284), "... in both the public and private spheres one can still clearly see the inequality that exists between men and women, because unlike men, women are often watched. They are watched by a society that regulates female behavior by determining, for example, how to dress, how to walk, how to look, how to speak. According to Tavares,

the woman has always lived in a world marked by concepts and rules that were not created by them, but for them. There was control over their words, their tasks, their behavior; in short, in patriarchal societies, there was investment in surveillance and in the disciplining of women's bodies. (TAVARES, 2012, p. 56).

This control becomes a technique, a disciplinary method of power. Foucault (2004, p. 118, author's emphasis) reports that "these methods that allow the meticulous control of the body's operations, that perform the constant subjection of its forces and impose on them a relation of docility-utility, are what we may call disciplines.

The woman needs [still] to be behaved, of the home and if she is not so, she is judged, condemned and blamed for any and all acts that happen to her. This is discipline





[still] forced on the woman. A control that is imposed on her body and her behavior. And yet, those who fulfill such roles are also blamed.

In the horizon of these conceptions, there are still many reasons that blame women for the violence they suffer, leading to the understanding that they deserve to be violated to learn how to behave properly. There is a context of the current society that [still] allows the acceptance and justification of these discourses and of this violence, and in holding the victims responsible for the violence suffered. This situation is considered based on the naturalization that men are superior and that still limits the possibilities of women's experiences in the public sphere.

Femicide is a form of manifestation of the power that is given to the male in a [still] patriarchal society. According to Cerqueira and Coelho,

Gender violence is a direct reflection of patriarchal ideology, which explicitly demarcates the roles and power relations between men and women. As a byproduct of patriarchy, the culture of machismo, often disseminated in an implicit or surreptitious way, places women as objects of desire and property of men, which ends up legitimating and feeding several types of violence [...] (CERQUEIRA E COELHO, 2014, p. 2).

Therefore, femicide is a manifestation of the historical power of men over women's bodies, considering them as their objects, an exercise of power that is historically and socially constructed and justified or supported by a sexist and patriarchal society that incriminates and blames women when, in this case, they are victims.

In the face of many social conquests in the last decades, we still see the sexist culture being reproduced in the discourses and practices of the subjects, a culture that passes on generations through the vestiges of the memory of a patriarchal society that devalues women to the detriment of male power.

4 Final considerations

This work sought to analyze and demonstrate, through concepts and examples, the power that is exercised over women through knowledge, cultural values, imaginary



the feminist reflection and the challenge of breaking with this macho culture and confronting patriarchal power.

In view of this, it is to be considered that a symbolic order is still perpetuated, marked by asymmetrical power relations between men and women that dynamize and resignify the daily life in society.

The woman is still linked to the idea of inferiority, submission, and servitude to the impulses and desires of the man, contributing to the naturalization of sayings that justify the speeches of the aggressor, legitimizing violence against women. There is support and social support in the guilt of the woman (victim).

It is necessary to face the powers reproduced in society, because our challenge is to fight always, until we conquer complete gender equality, from a change in the patriarchal culture.

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10

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