

The ideological discursive framework in femicide journalistic chronicles: María Soledad Morales' crime as a leading case¹

El marco ideológico discursivo en crónicas periodísticas de femicidios: el crimen de María Soledad Morales como caso emblemático

O enquadramento ideológico discursivo nas crônicas jornalísticas de feminicídios: o crime de María Soledad Morales como caso emblemático

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This work identifies some several discursive niches for naturalising gender violence by analysing a corpus on a leading femicide linked to the Argentinean political elite in the 1990s. Four journalistic chronicles were chosen, two published contemporary to the crime and two 20 years after, from three journals. The results indicate that the types of nominalisations have changed over time, but there is an enunciative matrix that remains. These results allowed us to recognise the functioning of discursive mechanisms of ideological formation and the socio-historical relations of continuity/discontinuity.

KEYWORDS: Discourse, femicide, ideology, journalism, gender violence.

Este trabajo identifica varios enclaves discursivos que naturalizan la violencia de género. Se analizó un corpus sobre un femicidio emblemático vinculado a la élite política argentina en los años noventa. Se seleccionaron cuatro crónicas –dos contemporáneas al crimen y dos a 20 años del asesinato a María Soledad Morales– de tres periódicos. Los resultados indican que, si bien con el tiempo se modificaron los tipos de nominalizaciones, existe una matriz enunciativa que perdura. Esto permitió reconocer el funcionamiento de mecanismos discursivos de formación ideológica y las relaciones de continuidad/discontinuidad sociohistórica.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Discurso, femicidio, ideología, periodismo, violencia de género.

Este trabalho identifica vários enclaves discursivos que naturalizam a violência de gênero. Foi analisado um corpus sobre um feminicídio emblemático ligado à elite política argentina na década de 1990. Foram selecionadas quatro crônicas –duas contemporâneas ao crime e duas 20 anos após o assassinato de María Soledad Morales– de três jornais. Os resultados indicam que, embora os tipos de nominalizações tenham sido modificados ao longo do tempo, existe uma matriz declarativa que persiste. Isso permitiu reconhecer o funcionamento dos mecanismos discursivos de formação ideológica e as relações de continuidade/descontinuidade sócio-históricas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Fala, feminicídio, ideologia, jornalismo, violência de gênero.

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INTRODUCTION

The femicide, i. e. the gender-based killing of a woman or a girl (UNODC, 2019), is the most brutal and ultimate expression in a continuum of extreme violence against women (Carrigan & Dawson, 2020). Crimes of this kind are the consequence of a patriarchal social system that legitimates norms and beliefs to sustain unequal power relationships. This kind of social relations places women in a condition of inferiority which causes vulnerability and more social disadvantages in their social status (Monárrez Fragoso, 2018, 2019). Although the concept of *femicide*⁶ has been associated only with murder, it also involves previous events, such as abduction, torture, and sexual violence (Guerrero et al., 2022; Monárrez, 2019). These features indicate that this kind of crime has some particular and distinctive characteristics (Carrigan & Dawson, 2020).

Considered a social phenomenon,⁷ the femicide has a specific media-communicative function (Segato, 2018) because, by creating fear and horror (Monárrez, 2019), the media send messages about the social place of women in social life. In effect, these messages compel women to keep their subordinate and objectified social status and, therefore, the power exerted by men over their bodies and lives (Fitz-Gibbon

⁶ There is currently a debate on the use of the terms “femicide” and “feminicide”. While the term “femicide” refers to gender-related killings of women, “feminicide” describes the killing (and also other harmful behaviors, such as genital mutilation or unsafe abortion) of women as a consequence of gender power structures exercised by the State and/or different social institutions (Carrigan & Dawson, 2020). This concept denounces the failure and complicity of States to prevent and punish these acts. Although both terms imply attending to the murder of women as a problematic social phenomenon, the term “femicide” involves other harmful acts and may generate, in this case, interpretations regarding the role of institutions’ which we cannot, with the type of analysis conducted, confirm. Therefore, in this article we will use the term “femicide”.

⁷ In Latin America there has been an accelerated increase in cases of femicide (UNODC, 2019).

& Walklate, 2023). The traditional mass media have emphasised this aspect (Aldrete, 2022; Holling, 2019), mainly by considering femicide a subgenre of true crime journalism. Not only has the use of the chronicle in mass media a sheer informative function (Benavides Bailón, 2021), but also an extensive tradition in social communication studies has recognized that the chronicle has particular strategies of argumentation, with a consequent formation of common sense and ideology (Jäger, 2003).

The narration of events conceals, in the apparent neutrality of the account of the facts, a linguistic system of persuasion that, in literate societies and cultures, resumes and shapes spaces of common sense, multiplying its influence and amplifying the argumentative power of some discourses (Zullo, 2016). Indeed, language in the media can be approached as a creative and reproductive device of meaning (Habermas, 2011) that legitimates and naturalises the social order established by a patriarchal ideology (Arcela Pérez, 2021). Despite this, if approached from a critical perspective, language can be used as a mechanism of resistance against the patriarchal order (Aldrete, 2022).

The mass media profit the complexity and elusiveness of discursive strategies to influence citizens' opinion and their awareness formation (Gregorio, 2011, 2021). This paper argues that, given that the chronicle is a textual type which circulates in the mass media, it employs some particular argumentative strategies, possibly handled by their recipients as automatic, unconscious and irreflexive acts, which allow them to incorporate specific ideological meanings (Hodge & Kress, 2001). In this research, we have tried to dismantle, from a gender perspective, the grammatical strategies by which a media argumentative discursive stance is constructed and validated. We have considered the chronicles published about an especially very cruel femicide that occurred in Argentina in the nineties: the crime of María Soledad Morales. We analysed the treatment it received in three newspapers of massive and national circulation: *Clarín*, *La Nación* and *Página 12*.⁸ Such newspapers serve different audiences.

⁸ The journalistic texts analysed do not mention authorship. The custom of responsibility of the notes with mention of authorship is a practice that some newspapers in Argentina began to implement since mid-2010.

María Soledad Morales was a seventeen-year-old high school student raped and murdered by Guillermo Luque (the son of a national congressman) in complicity with Luis Tula, her boyfriend. The crime took place in the capital of Catamarca —a province in the northwest of Argentina—, in the early morning of September 9, 1990. Also participating in the crime were Diego Jalil (the son of the city mayor), Arnoldito Saadi (the cousin of the governor of Catamarca) and Miguel Ferreyra (the son of the police chief). They drugged her with cocaine, raped her and murdered. The judicial process was much delayed: only 12 years after the crime, a sentence was passed (*Página 12*, 2002). Due to its complex political and social aspects, it became a key and symptomatic case to learn how the political and economic power covered up the crime. For this reason, twenty years after the crime, a public commemoration was held, which led to the publication of chronicles about this event. This analysis contributes to the growing research on the media discourse on femicides in Latin America (Aldrete, 2022; Holling, 2019).

IDEOLOGY IN LANGUAGE

Van Dijk (2000) defines discourse as a communication or verbal interaction event, with three dimensions that characterise it: a) the use of language; b) the communication of beliefs (cognition); and c) interaction in social situations. Discourse analysis allows, through a system of categories and procedures, to reach descriptions that report characteristics of textual and contextual dimensions. The textual dimension accounts for discourse structures at different levels of description, while the contextual dimension relates the structural description to different properties of the context, such as representations or sociocultural factors (Van Dijk, 2000). By configuring stories about events in community and social life, the mass media, including the written press, build social universes with specific, non-random characteristics that respond to a given moment and enable the reader to make a certain specific interpretation of the facts.

Critical Linguistics (CL) (Hodge & Kress, 2001), based on the assumptions of Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 2006),

proposes that rigorous discourse analysis makes it possible to recognize and reveal the discursive mechanisms by which social meanings are generated, that is, the beliefs underlying social interactions. The theoretical and empirical developments of CL are mainly concerned with analysing how relations of domination, power and control manifest themselves linguistically (Fowler et al., 1983). One of these developments is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2013; Fairclough & Wodak, 2000), which proposes to critically investigate social inequality and the ideological structures that express, constitute and legitimise them.

Fairclough and Wodak (2000) affirm that discursive practices produce and reproduce unequal power relations between social groups (social class, gender, age, profession, etc.). Language reproduces and legitimises inequality through specific and strategic uses that situate people and speak about them and their relationships from a particular cultural framework. Thus, for example, a structure such as: “*asamblea en la madrugada salteña*” allows detaching agentivity through an elided process (X summoned the assembly), minimising and hiding the identity of the agents (Zullo, 2016).

This ideological burden is not always evident to speakers, listeners and readers. The CDA proposes to unveil and make intelligible these discursive mechanisms of ideological formation (Fairclough & Wodak, 2000).

From this framework, journalistic texts, although formulated by an individual subject, are the product of ideological structures that underlie the processes of inequality, and therefore, from a certain ideological position, they relate events and perspectives on reality. This position does not conceive the authorship of an isolated, objective and neutral subject, but rather the fact that an ideological structure always shapes and channels the worldview. These assumptions enable us to consider journalistic texts as units of analysis.

The CL categories allow us to attend to the grammatical relations of each utterance considering the different schemes of processes and participants enabled by each language. In fact, each language allows us to categorise our experience, build it in terms of processes and participants. For Spanish, verbs and nouns are the word classes that

develop the functions of process and participant schemas (Zullo, 2016). A process can be protagonized by a single participant or a group of them. The participants concerned may also be represented from the point of view of groupness or individualities. Each process, encoded in a verbal act, shows a construction with the presence of three relevant instances: the image of the person issuing the message, the representation of a possible addressee and the fact being reported, ideologized.

The first analytical procedure is to delimit utterances into clauses, phrases consisting of an event and its modifiers. Events are encoded in verbs, and their modifiers are adjectives and adverbs. There are two groups of processes: actional —referring to a concrete action— and relational —expressing relations between participants. Actionals are subdivided into transactives, non-transactives and pseudo-transactives. The first present eventive processes of two participants; the second, a single participant; the last, semiotic actions and processes that appear to be transactive, but are not. Participants, on the other hand, are presented in nouns governed by eventive processes.

The media stabilise, naturalise, disseminate and amplify ideological meanings. Addressing the analysis of journalistic articles is important because, thanks to this, the struggle between ideologies to preserve the monopoly of common sense is made visible and the mechanisms of naturalisation of meanings can be dismantled (Zullo, 2016). By operating from the CDA, both in the field of interpretation and production, we will be able to recognize enclaves of legitimization of inequalities and propose other schemes to produce meaning (Fairclough, 2013).

Thus, the purpose of this article is to analyse which are the interpretation schemes that the journalistic discourse articulates so that readers can understand acts involving gender violence. We hope that the analysis can also account for the social implications of these discursive practices.

AN EMBLEMATIC CASE OF FEMICIDE: THE CRIME OF MARÍA SOLEDAD MORALES

María Soledad Morales was 17 years old. She was a student at the Catholic School of Carmen and San José, in the province of Catamarca,

northwest Argentina. Her murder took place in the early morning of September 9, 1990. The homicide⁹ was made visible by the national media on September 11 of the same year, two days after the fact. Those directly implicated in the crime were Luis Tula, her boyfriend, 12 years older than her, and Guillermo Luque, son of the national deputy Ángel Luque (Bergman & Szurmuk, 2006; CPM, 2019). The day before the crime, María Soledad had attended an event organised by her school. On her way out, she was picked up by Luis Tula, who took her to a discotheque where several children of political officials, including Guillermo Luque, were present. According to the testimonies of guards at the place, María Soledad left *in a state of dazzle*, was forced by several to enter into a car. The following day, her body was found in a garbage dump seven kilometers away from the city with signs of having been brutally raped and tortured. An autopsy revealed that she had been drugged (CPM, 2019). This murder shocked the country. The demand for justice generated unprecedented social mobilizations, manifested by means of marches of silence (Elizalde, 2018). These were led by school administrators and by her family, mainly Elías and Ada, her parents.

By April 1991, the lack of progress in the investigation on those involved, as well as the causes and circumstances of the crime, generated tension among the population of the province and within the provincial government institutions. As a result, the president at that time, Carlos Menem, decided to intervene federally in the province. Despite the effective intervention, the investigation into the crime progressed with such heavy steps that, eight years after the crime took place, and after numerous accusations of cover-up and a political crisis within the ruling provincial party, the Court's decision was announced. Guillermo Luque was sentenced to 21 years in prison for rape and murder. Luis Tula, tried for secondary participation. Hugo "Hueso" Ibáñez and Luis "El Loco" Méndez, Luque's friends, were arrested for being co-perpetrators of the rape and the killing.

⁹ Femicide was only recognized by the Argentine State in 2012 as an aggravating circumstance, with the term "gender violence" in Law 26.791, which amends the Penal Code (Castro-Aniyar et al., 2020).

In short, since her body was discovered, María Soledad was repeatedly victimized by a judicial and political system that deprived her of her right to justice and promoted impunity for the murderers. Indeed, manipulation of evidence and pressure on witnesses and judicial authorities with the aim of covering up and erasing this crime were proven (Gayol & Kessler, 2018).

Although at the time the homicide of María Soledad was not regarded as a gender crime, we consider it to be an emblematic type of femicide. The case is riddled with elements that describe what is currently qualified as a gender-based hate crime. Acts and sayings demonstrate excess and ostentation of unequal power relations, among which are rape and torture, and also the subordination and dehumanization of women's bodies. In the words of Sister Martha Pelloni, rector of the school: "María Soledad was for us the first case of femicide" (*Página 12*, 2021). Evidently, gender-related murders of women in Argentina did not begin with this case; however, it visibilize the institutional violence exercised in femicides. In turn, it contributed to the social articulation of student social movements in Argentina (Manzano, 2011).

This femicide, moreover, was crossed by political and institutional factors that removed authoritarian enclaves (Bergman & Szurmuk, 2006). The search for justice and popular actions set up the case as a symbol of the struggle against political corruption, nepotism and state impunity (Elizalde, 2018; Gayol & Kessler, 2018).

Considering the characteristics of the crime of María Soledad Morales, its circumstances and social and political repercussions, we consider it necessary to distinguish the ideological schemas that enable and naturalise these actions. For this purpose, we analyse the treatment of the event and its repercussions in three national media of the written press in Argentina. Given that the ideological schema can condense the same content with variations, we considered two types of factors: the synchronic variation in the presentation of the case and the diachronic variation in the representation of the crime in the commemorative chronicles published twenty years after the event. We selected the twenty-year chronicles because the conviction was enacted twelve years after the event, which allowed the twenty-year commemorative chronicles to also incorporate the political aspect of the cover-up.

Our objective is, from the comparison of descriptions of discursive uses in different socio-historical periods, to understand the ways in which meanings about violence against women are legitimised and disputed. In this sense, the emblematic case of the femicide of María Soledad Morales can provide indicators to distinguish the way in which the media construct meanings when faced with the need to represent the image of a woman victim of an act of patriarchal violence.

METHODOLOGY

Corpus of analysis

The corpus analysed is composed of four texts referring to the femicide of María Soledad Morales from Argentine printed newspapers, two from 1990, publishing during the first 15 days after the crime (*Clarín*, September 11; *La Nación*, September 21) and two from 2010 (*Clarín* and *Página 12*, both on September 5). The corpus was chosen considering, at one hand, the social representation of this type of discourse. On the other hand, given that the chronicle is a brief text, and less complex in its construction—compared to other types of journalistic discourse such as the editorial—, it represents a clear example of the degree of operationalization of ideological schemas, since the mechanisms are presented by coercing a simple and automatic processing. These characteristics make it an ideal enclave for the study of specific structures of argumentation (Jäger, 2003). This allows us to unveil grammatical-ideological mechanisms naturalised in grammar (Fairclough, 2013).

The selected chronicles relate the days following the discovery of the body (1990) and commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the femicide (2010). In addition to the consideration of the thematic cut out, the selection of the corpus was made regarding the fact that the two texts were of similar length (Mean of words: 1 173, Range: 150-2 621), and the same journalistic genre (chronicle), as well as the moment when they were published (first fifteen days after the crime and four days before the twentieth anniversary). Thus, the comparison and the possibility of occurrence of nominalizations had the same rate of occurrence. On the other hand, these three newspapers were selected

because they are national in scope and are considered to cover a wide readership.

Categories of analysis

Firstly, the presence or absence of the piece of news on this event in each of the newspapers was compared. Secondly, formal aspects (the organisation and length of the text) were studied. Finally, given that our objective is to attend to the ways in which the victim –María Soledad Morales– and the event –femicide– are named, the nominalizations were analysed, specifically pointing out the form, type, frequency and segment in which they were included. A comparative, qualitative and quantitative survey was carried out.

We have selected nominalizations as they are the categories that allow us to mention the protagonists/participants of a phenomenon/event/occurrence about which we are enunciating, evidencing a vision of the world (Zullo, 2016).

Analysis procedure

A comparative table was made to discriminate the categories under analysis. The table reports formal and structural aspects, considering the newspaper and the date. As for the categories, nominal values, frequency indexes (frequency and ratio) have been calculated. The types of nominalization used have also been described and differentiated.

RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, when comparing the insertion of the chronicles of the event in the three media, it is found that only *Clarín* and *La Nación* published news about the event during the first fortnight after the homicide, while *Página 12* did not publish any news during that period. In 2010, two media outlets published during the fortnight of the anniversary: *Clarín* and *Página 12*. These considerations are relevant regarding that the homicide occurred in a province to which newspapers, although being of national scope, did not use to give space. However, during that period the first chronicles on the case were published.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF RESOURCES OF THE DISCURSIVE DEVICES

Medium	<i>Clarín</i>		<i>La Nación</i>		<i>Clarín</i>		<i>Page 12</i>	
Date	09/11/1990		09/21/1990		09/05/2010		09/05/2010	
Title	Young woman killed in Catamarca		Demonstration to demand the clarification of a crime		María Soledad, the wounds are still open		Twenty Years of Loneliness ^a	
Paragraphs	9		4		22		34	
Words	445		150		1 473		2 621	
Nominalizations								
Victim	12	63%	1	33%	17	51%	31	53%
Event	7	37%	2	77%	18	49%	27	47%
Total	19	100%	3	100%	35	100%	57	100%

^a In Spanish Soledad (loneliness) is a Proper Noun, using this ambiguity the title explodes it to remark the lapsus of time since the femicide.

Source: Own elaboration.

With respect to the length of the chronicles, we observed that in 1990 fewer paragraphs were dedicated (Mean: 6.5, Range: 4-9), while in 2010 the chronicles were longer (Mean: 28, Range: 22-34), almost quadrupling the length. As for the number of words, in 1990 the chronicles were more succinct than in 2010 (1990, Mean: 297.5, Range 150-445; 2010, Mean: 2 047, Range: 1 473-2 621). Regarding the titles, while in 1990 *Clarín* omits to mention the criminals when narrating the event through the choice of the verb form “matan” (they kill), it mentions the victim with the noun phrase “*una joven*” (a young girl). *La Nación* identifies the event without mentioning the victim or the criminals. In 2010, *Clarín* mentions the victim with a proper name, but omits the event and the perpetrators. Reference is made to the event in a rather metaphorical way: “*las heridas*” (the wounds), making the lack of justice explicit with the expression “*siguen abiertas*” (they are still open). *Página 12* mentions both the victim and the event in the same noun phrase with an ambiguous reading schema by substituting the sole reference to the proper noun “Soledad” for a general reference to the noun phrase with an abstract noun: “[la] soledad”. Regarding the number of nominalizations, *Clarín* has a higher density with respect to the victim (63% versus 33% of *La Nación*), while after twenty years the ratio is balanced (51% and 53%).

Table 2 shows the nominalizations of the 1990 chronicles by the newspaper, classified by victim and event. In the *Clarín* chronicle we observe that the variety of phrases to refer to the victim can be grouped, according to semantic similarity, into three classes. Type 1 includes mentions of the victim in terms of her social roles: (young girl, student, candidate for her school’s queen). Type 2 involves mentions of the identification of the victim (the single reference noun phrase: María Soledad Morales). Type 3 includes mentions of the victim as a corpse (the corpse, the body, etc.). In this way, the participant is identified with a noun and the enunciation of what happened, summarised in the following clause: “María Soledad Morales, she was a beautiful young woman and they killed her”.

When analyzing the mentions in *La Nación*, we observe that, possibly due to the short length of the text, they refer to the victim only with the mention of Type 2. These are located in the body of the news item, not in the headline.

TABLE 2
NOMINALIZATIONS IN THE 1990 CHRONICLE BY MEDIUM, VICTIM AND EVENT

Part of the chronicle	<i>Clarín</i>		<i>La Nación</i>	
	Victim	Event	Victim	Event
Forelock	Candidate for Queen of her school.	-	-	-
Title	A young woman.	was killed ^b .	-	Clarification of a crime.
P. ^a I	The corpse of María Soledad; a 17-year-old student; the body... half-buried, covered only by the brassiere, badly beaten and with some rodent bites	-	The young student María Soledad Morales.	Murder.
P. II	María Soledad Morales; she; queen of the school	-	-	-
P. III	-	-	-	Investigation of this fact.
P. IV	The student.	Appearance of the corpse; letters in the issue. ^c	-	-
P. V	María Soledad Morales.	Crime.	-	-
Subtitle	-	Death.	-	-
P. VI	The identity of the victim.	-	-	-
P. VII	The death of the student; she was dumped.	The death of the student.	-	-
P. VIII	-	Crime.	-	-

^a P. = paragraph. ^b action referring to the fact. ^c matter = fact.

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the fact, if we distinguish the mentions semantically, we can observe that *Clarín* uses two types of nominalized syntagms. Type A is formed by references to the homicide (the death, the crime, etc.) and Type B, by references to the finding of the victim's body (the appearance of a corpse). In Type A we have also included the mention of a conjugated verb (*matan/they kill*), which can be considered, because of semantic proximity, a reference to the grammatical pattern of nominalizations, although it does not strictly respond to this pattern. We consider that this mention can functionally resemble a nominalization, given that, discursively, it allows for the deletion of agentivity.

In *La Nación*, we observe that mentions of the event (Type A) predominate, while only once does a nominalization of the victim appear.

Table 3 presents the analysis of the commemorative chronicles published twenty years after the femicide.

In these articles, we observe that *Clarín* recalls the event and its circumstances by retaking the forms recognized in the chronicle of the 1990s. Despite the repetition of the previously identified pattern, it is possible to recognize some variations. On the one hand, there is a reversal in the frequency of the types of nominalizations. While Type 3 predominates in the 1990s, Type 2 predominates in 2010.

On the other hand, within Type 2 we observe the emergence of nominalizations with a higher degree of variation and specification (for example, the construction of a referential phrase that introduces a characterization of the truncated projects and predilections of the young woman by a relative clause: "The girl who wanted to be a model and loved Paz Martínez"). More speakers are brought (her mother), which introduce references of emotional identification and the search to recover her identity. Thus we read that she refers to the victim by her nickname: *Sole*. This movement shows the victim's search for identification based on the recovery of life narratives, and also shows the affection of her humble family that still misses her. At the end of the note, the nominalizations that allow to identify the victim as a martyr are introduced, with the nominalization "venerated image", a reference to the cult which originated in the popular movement. In fact, the events predicates that complete this nominalization refer to the acts of a people

TABLE 3
NOMINATIONS IN THE NEWS IN 2010 BY MEDIA, VICTIM AND EVENT

Part of the chronicle	<i>Clarín</i>		<i>Page 12</i>	
	Victim	Event	Victim	Event
Forelock	-	-	María Soledad Morales.	Crime of María Soledad Morales, a case that moved the country.
Title	María Soledad	-	Twenty Years of Loneliness.	-
Copete	crime of the young woman.	crime of the young woman.	-	-
P. ^a I	participant in the crime of María Soledad Morales.	participant in the crime of María Soledad Morales.	María Soledad Morales; the disfigured corpse of the teenager.	Crime.
P. II	murder of María Soledad Morales.	murder of María Soledad Morales.	María Soledad; his daughter.	-
P. III	-	that crime.	María Soledad.	Talking about the case; a closed story; the case.
P. IV	-	the case.	María Soledad.	-
P. V	-	after the crime; the cause.	-	-

Part of the chronicle	<i>Clarín</i>		<i>Page 12</i>	
	Victim	Event	Victim	Event
P. VI	-	-	María Soledad.	The case and its ghosts; the murder; the crime; the cover-up; the case.
P. VII	The body of María Soledad.	Rape.	-	Twenty years after the crime.
P. VIII	She was in love with that man.	-	the naked and mutilated body of María Soledad.	-
P. IX	María Soledad; la Sole (The Alone)	-	-	Crime.
P. X	María Soledad.	her way to death.	María Soledad.	-
P. XI	-	Crime.	A girl who was murdered.	A girl who was murdered.
P. XII	-	-	His daughter.	-
P. XIII	María Soledad.	This story.	-	The case that changed their lives.
P. XIV	-	-	The crime of María Soledad.	the crime of María Soledad.
P. XV	The death of María Soledad; what had happened to María Soledad.	The death of María Soledad; what had happened to María Soledad.	-	-

Part of the chronicle	<i>Clarín</i>		<i>Page 12</i>	
	Victim	Event	Victim	Event
P. XVII	-	-	The corpse.	-
P. XIX	María Soledad.	What happened to María Soledad; about the subject; the case; something unfair.	-	-
P. XX	María Soledad.	She was raped and murdered.	The death of María Soledad; the girl; they took her... they intoxicated her with cocaine and raped her; they took her to Ángel Luque's house; to resuscitate her without success; they got rid of her body.	María Soledad's death; they took her... they intoxicated her with cocaine and raped her; they took her to Ángel Luque's house; to resuscitate her without success; they got rid of her body.
P. XXI	The body of María Soledad.	-	María Soledad.	the case; the subject is discussed.
P. XXII	María Soledad, the girl who wanted to be a model and loved Paz Martínez; venerated image.	-	María Soledad; the murdered young woman, guardian angel of the youth.	-

Part of the chronicle	<i>Clarín</i>			<i>Page 12</i>	
	Victim	Event	Victim	Event	
P. XXIII	-	-	-	-	This is an abuse of the rights of young people.
P. XXIV	-	-	María Soledad.	-	-
P. XXV	-	-	the murderer of his daughter.	-	His daughter's murderer.
P. XXIX	-	-	-	-	Twenty years after the crime; the homicide.
P. XXXI	-	-	María Soledad case.	-	María Soledad case.
P. XXXIII	-	-	remembering María Soledad.	-	-
P. XXXIV	-	-	I am accompanied by my daughter; she, whose name is Soledad; the one who accompanies me and gives me strength.	-	-

^a P. = paragraph.

Source: Own elaboration.

who resort to the image of María Soledad to ask for her miraculous intercession.

As for *Página 12* (taking into account that this media did not publish about the event during the first week after the event occurred in 1990), in 2010 there is a predominance of Type 2 mentions —denomination that appeals to the sole reference—: “María Soledad Morales”. Type 1 mentions are used —those that refer to the victim based on her social status—, in this case selecting forms that refer to her age (girl, young woman, adolescent). Type 3 mentions —those that refer to the victim as the remains of the crime (body, corpse)—, are in the last event of a series in which they explicitly refer to the murderers, with previous pronominal mentions that refer to Type 1 or 2 nominalizations: “They intoxicated her with cocaine and raped her”, “They took her to Ángel Luque’s house”, “to revive her without success”, “they got rid of the body”. Likewise, the insertion of nominalizations is recognized when the narrator’s voice changes to the mother: “my daughter”, “She, whose name is Soledad”, “the one who accompanies me and gives me strength”.

In the ways of naming the event we find the following: “case”, “crime”, “homicide”, “the death”, “rape”, “the cause”, “the murder”. The first is the most reiterated. In paragraph XXIII —middle of the article—, the fact is referred to as “an abuse of the rights of young people”, which focuses on the victim in the role of an adolescent raped and murdered by adults.

In addition to identifying discursive mechanisms, mechanisms that respond to ideological positions have been recognized. *Página 12*, twenty years later, seems to prefer to configure the chronicle focusing on the state of decomposition in which the body was found, detailing the conditions in which the corpse appeared (“disfigured corpse of the teenager, naked and mutilated body”).

DISCUSSION

Representation of the victim and the aggressors

The analysis of the discursive mechanisms through which the victim is presented in the newspaper chronicle has allowed us to recognize

that, despite some differences among the newspapers, the mentions refer to instances in which corporeality, identity and subjectivity are subtracted. This discursive movement manages to turn a subject into a mere body of the crime, an object on which justice acts to recognize clues and evidence. In this way, the victim's humanity is subtracted and the violent actions and the agentivity of the culprits are mitigated, because the crime is presented in the final stage of the scene, that of the corpse. This procedure was slightly modified in *Clarín* 2010. There, single reference nominalizations predominate, which enable identification ("María Soledad Morales").

This finding allows us to infer that there is an instance of disarming the mechanism, but, when analysing the sequences, we observe that this procedure does not seek to recover the identification to incriminate the perpetrators, but to build an image of the victim, an icon that, like a holy card, can be worshipped by the faithful (see Results). The construction of this martyrological image also prevents the identification of the culprits, since "a saint (or martyr)" is so because of their divine destiny. This mechanism, as the one previously characterised, continues to exclude the guilty parties and the mention of their violent and cruel actions. In short, in *Clarín* 2010 the focus of attention is diverted and the central axis is no longer the crime or justice, but the miracles that may derive from the prayers to this young dead woman.

It is this framework that allows us to understand the statement in one of the final paragraphs: "she was in love with that man", as part of a prefixed destiny. The reference to the victim is retaken with a nominal pronoun (*she*), which demonstrates the high accessibility of the referent (Ariel, 2014) but also the subtraction of unique identity. The predication "she was in love with that man" refers to an adult subject in a definite phrase ("that man"), mentioned in previous utterances as a participant (but not an agent) in the events of the crime. In other words: "she", young and student, got involved with a man who murdered her. Inevitably, and based on the ideological framework constructed (mainly from removing the agentivity of the murderers), an inference is made that María Soledad Morales "sought" her femicide by getting involved with someone older. This inference raises in the readers the question: is she not also responsible for her tragic end?

Representation of the event

The analysis allowed us to appreciate that in 1990 the case is mainly considered as a forensic event, that is, the chronicle is about the discovery of a corpse. The construction of the victim is relegated as a function of the story, although the confusion of clues to identify motives and perpetrators is emphasised. This presentation of the event cannot be separated from other parallel mechanisms. Thus, we observe that the strategies of enunciation to introduce the alleged perpetrators are of two types. On the one hand, there is an appeal to the use of prudence and caution, which is known as “security reserve” (Zullo, 2016). We recall that those involved were people of political renown (deputies, the governor, their children). On the other hand, euphemisms are used to try to make visible the institutional concern to unveil the motives and those responsible for the murder.

However, it is clear that the scarcity of the publishing of chronicles within the first fortnight and the arrangement of a device that hides the events in agentive terms to avoid mentioning the people and institutions involved (provincial government, the police, the son of a national deputy as the main suspect, etc.) reinforces the discourse of double standards. It tries to solve the crime “in the abstract”, but it retains the mentions that make the agents, circumstances and the identity of the victim visible.

Regarding the absence of the chronicle in *Página 12*, it should be noted that this newspaper began to be published in 1987 in the Argentine capital and, at the time of the crime, its circulation in the provinces was limited. For this reason, we believe that as a police event it was of no interest to urban readers, but the situation changed when it took on political overtones. This would explain why *Página 12* published the first chronicles of the event a month after the crime.

In the 2010 chronicles we observe instances that break this pattern. Thus, for example, in *Página 12* the title establishes ambiguity as a key to reading. This semantic movement analyzed leads the reader to recover a series of inferences related to the circumstances under which the case did not find a judicial resolution. Before the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the crime, the ambiguity summons the exercise of collective memory and represents through inferences events that are recovered from a common fund of knowledge.

In synthesis, by omitting, minimising or blaming the victims for the actions of the violence exercised against them, and making the aggressors invisible, a discursive violence is exercised (Holling, 2019) that, in turn, promotes impunity for the aggressors or femicides, and the lack of justice for the victims and their families (Monárrez, 2019). In tune with discourse analysts who consider this problematic, we have described this discursive strategy as a patriarchal enunciative enclave (Aldrete, 2022; Cabrejo, 2016).

CONCLUSIONS

From a perspective that considers language as a social practice (Wodak & Meyer, 2002), we have analysed the discursive devices through which violence against women is skimmed and naturalised. We have considered the femicide of María Soledad Morales due to the emblematic status of this event and its treatment in the media. As we have seen in the chronicles, a common feature that crosses epochs is the excessive emphasis on the mention of the victim, although with formal variations. It should be noted that this feature has been pointed out by some authors as a way of blurring the structural character of this crime, reducing it to an individual and isolated problem (Holling, 2019).

In turn, by emphasising the characterization of the victim and omitting the mention of the murderers, a discursive violence is exercised which takes away the political and human value of María Soledad's body and deprives her of her right to justice as well as the right to reparation for her family. In turn, they reinforce unequal power relations and make it impossible to question them, amplifying the communicative function of chronicling femicide (Segato, 2018).

It is also observed that this procedure is subordinated to the socio-political need to make the aggressors invisible, which shows the complicity of the State and the media. This operation is more noticeable due to the circumstances of a scarce initial diffusion because it is a province far from the capital of the country and because the murder was linked to the son of a national deputy. As for the mentions of the participants, the mentions of the victim present her as disembodied, as

dispossessed or as a martyr. This strategy, by omission or inclusion, legitimises and naturalizes a social order that perpetuates patriarchal violence. The permanence of the social order is evident when we analyse the mentions of the aggressors in the 2010 chronicles, where only two are mentioned: the condemned. All those, men and women, who were accomplices, covered up, distorted, hid or lied, evade their responsibility while the victim is sanctified. In other words, the press is the medium that perpetuates a system in which women are the continent of gender and class violence, violence whose visibility is regulated by the patriarchal system and the political system.

Finally, we believe that this analysis reveals a social problem that concerns all areas of citizen participation, especially the scientific-academic one: the need to dismantle discourses and practices that legitimise and promote violence against women (Pispira et al., 2022). This is the genuine way for social transformations to occur.

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