



## Gender Violence in *Temporada de huracanes*, by Fernanda Melchor: from subjective violence to systemic violence.

Violencia de género en *Temporada de huracanes*, de Fernanda Melchor: de la violencia subjetiva a la violencia sistémica.

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### ABSTRACT

This essay approaches gender violence from a systemic violence study in Fernanda Melchor's novel *Temporada de huracanes* (2017). It analyses the violence exerted towards three female characters from their point of view. The purpose is to identify the elements of Systematic violence that allow physical, psychological, and sexual abuse in the three main stories that represent gender violence within the novel. The method employed was a critical comparison between the different types of violence and its' perpetrator's' motivations, framed in the systemic violence approach. Finally, it was concluded that these forms of violence are allowed within the setting of a patriarchal-colonial structure that reproduces dominance from the male gender towards the female gender. Which, ultimately, allows a normalized reproduction of violence towards women in various degrees: from psychological-verbal aggressions, to systematic rape and femicide.

**Keywords:** Genre Violence. Systemic Violence. Literature and Violence.

### RESUMEN

El presente ensayo aborda la violencia de género a partir del estudio de la violencia sistémica de la novela *Temporada de huracanes* (2017), de Fernanda Melchor. A partir de la perspectiva de tres personajes femeninos se establece una comparación entre las formas de violencia



ejercida hacia ellas. Esto con el propósito de indagar las partes de una estructura sistemática de violencia que permiten el abuso físico, psicológico y sexual en las tres historias principales que representan la violencia de género en la novela. Como procedimiento se realizó una comparación analítica entre los distintos tipos de violencia y motivaciones de los perpetradores enmarcados en la propuesta de una violencia sistémica. Finalmente, se formuló la conclusión de que estas formas de violencia son permitidas en el marco de una estructura patriarcal-colonial que reproduce la dominación del género masculino sobre el género femenino. Lo cual, en última instancia, permite una reproducción normalizada de la violencia hacia las mujeres en sus distintos grados: desde la agresión psicológica-verbal, pasando por la violación sistemática, llegando al feminicidio.

**Palabras Clave:** Violencia de género. Violencia sistémica. Literatura y violencia.

### From exacerbated violence to systemic violence

*Temporada de huracanes* (2017) – Fernanda Melchor's second novel – is characterized by the unfolding, throughout its plot, of an irremediable maelstrom with which it only remains to wait for it to continue its journey; not without the hope that it will not return anymore. That vortex that is placed at the center of the narrative is nothing less than an exacerbated violence,<sup>1</sup> devouring everything in its path in its notorious stark chaos. It could even be said that the violence that takes place throughout its pages is, by itself, a kind of protagonist of which everything revolves around it: the actions of the characters, their thoughts and their testimonies. But we know that the novel, like any literary text, is not a treatise on violence whose purpose is to expose the subject in a schematic order. Ultimately, it is a fiction that tells the story of a main act of violence, surrounded by many others, narrated through different voices that are isolated without any escape from that maelstrom of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> An exacerbated violence not precisely in the visual sense of imbloodthirsty or at least explicit oxygens, since this only happens at specific moments in some chapters – mainly with respect to the corpse of the Witch. Exacerbated rather in the structural sense of relentless violence. On the one hand, referring to the narrative order of which a bloody testimony is barely concluded when hardly any other happens. And, on the other hand, in the experiences of the plot in which violence appears normalized and instituted in the daily life of the Matosa – the community where it takes place *Hurricane season*—.



However, it is no guarantee of anything to stay in that false here, that turning point that causes us a dangerous paralysis of reflection. One might ask: what is behind this exacerbated violence? What can we see here from its very center, in this eye of the hurricane, which in turn allows us to conceive some degree of order in its structure?

The proposal of this essay is to approach the analysis of the violence contained in *Temporada de huracanes* from a gender perspective and through a systematic reading. While the novel is mostly narrated through the perspective of various characters related in some way to the central crime of the plot, as a whole it could be interpreted as the recreation of the crude mosaic of a society immersed in the daily dynamics of violence. Well, although the first glimpse of violence takes shape from the different testimonies of the characters, in reality it is not isolated in the personal history of each one: rather it would be part of a context that is distended surrounding them all *equally* and that, finally, is correlated to a system of power relations that exercises dominion over these personal stories. In such a way that a first point would be to underline this "*equally*", because this system of power relations –even when it involves the daily life of the inhabitants of the Matosa– ends up configuring inequalities to particular characters who share a fundamental characteristic for the plot: they are women. An analytical approach is not necessary to verify that a considerable part of all the violence narrated in the novel happens specifically towards women; which even, unfortunately, have different ages. So this gender violence that occurred in the plot could deserve more precise attention in the three main cases of this violence, since once put into perspective it would be possible to observe how they correspond to the same socio-political structure delineated within the novel itself as it is the patriarchy.

To enter into an analysis of these cases in the understanding of gender violence we would have to move away, somewhat paradoxically, in order to achieve a more general reading. This is not fortuitous, the violence that occurs in *Temporada de huracanes* becomes so exacerbated that in a first reading one could intuit above all the complete absence of some kind of order or origin; something that would explain well the expression of "violence has no explanation". In reality, violence — like any social phenomenon — can be shaped from a structure with correlative elements; and in



*Temporada de huracanes* this can be interpreted as such. So the exacerbated violence that we witness in the novel could be equated in a first approach to subjective violence, a first category of violence according to the proposal of Žižek (2009). Such violence is framed in the "social reality" of specific individuals involved in the interaction. Its main characteristic is that it departs from the desirable normality as "disturbance of the 'normal' state of affairs" (p. 10), and is therefore the most visible; in fact, it happens with such immediacy that it is possible to identify the aggressor agent with relative ease.

However, the next category is the one that would require observation at greater distance and detail: objective violence. This would be placed within the "real", which can be understood as "a spectral, inexorable and 'abstract' logic [...] that determines what happens in social reality" (Žižek, 2009, p. 24). So subjective violence would be those fully *visible* violent acts that occur in our day to day, but that violence would be just the most superficial sample of the objective violence that has developed in the less visible and apparent social fabric. In this category of violence there is no disturbance of the "normal" state of affairs, at least not subjective, but rather a normalized standard of violence. That is why, unlike subjective violence, objective violence would have no or almost no visibility. As noted at the beginning of the paragraph, this category involves an exercise in distance, but not only emotional but mainly epistemological. It is one whose conflict is not explained individually but from large structures that put in tension elements of an analytical nature in function of a more systematic appreciation. In fact, due to the complexity involved, there are two other subcategories in which objective violence is divided: symbolic and systemic.

Symbolic violence responds to the allegorical character of language, it is the violent act that implies the very verbalization of the world; or more precisely, the symbolic subtraction that reduces the state of things to a design that allows them to be named. Quoting Žižek (2009): "as Hegel already knew, "[it] is in the symbolization of something [where] there is violence" (p. 79). On the other hand, systemic violence ultimately corresponds to "the often catastrophic consequences of the homogeneous functioning of our economic and political systems [becoming in turn our socio-cultural system]" (Žižek, 2009, p. 10). It begins from an interrelation of the systems that structure society, and



that being immersed within all of them is interpreted from multiple levels of analysis. In more detailed terms, systemic violence corresponds to a series of mutually dependent actions and discourses that in turn exercise forms of coercion, and that impose relations of domination or exploitation on a large scale. These elements that are related between the categories of objective-systemic violence are precisely those that converge in the face of a dynamic of oppression that gives rise to gender violence. The women within the novel live it in the very individuality of their flesh, but the colonization inserted in the very heart of patriarchy is the symbolic mechanism and action that derives from the socio-political system that promotes such exacerbated violence towards the female gender.

### **Gender-based violence in *Temporada de huracanes*: three different cases of three degrees of violence.**

The three stories that could be considered most representative of a gender violence framed within the novel are those of Yesenia, Norma and the Witch. Each developed in its own chapter, the three women of different ages are victims of different degrees of violence. Yesenia is a young woman who, being the oldest, takes care of her cousins, but is physically and, above all, psychologically abused by her grandmother. She, by giving preference to her only male grandson, belittles, assaults and beats her especially when the granddaughter tries to tell her about the grandson's vandalism or when she finds in him marks of reprimands that Yesenia made her for her bad behavior. The second is Norma, a girl who since the age of twelve has been raped by her stepfather on multiple occasions through a dynamic of emotional exploitation that even takes the form of a fully internalized blackmail; everything, of course, while her mother is not at home because she is working. The sexual abuse of the stepfather on Norma occurs in a staggered way, first through verbal and gestural insinuations and then move to physical contact and then to genital-coital forcing, finally getting her pregnant. Parallel to this, Norma's stepfather exerts a psychological pressure that represses her until she flees the house with the aim of committing suicide. Finally, the third case addressed here will be that of the Witch, whose murder is in fact the central event of the plot as this is the plot point with which the novel opens and closes, as well as from which the testimonies of the rest of the characters are detached



and related in some way. Although each act of violence has different implications for the victims, and therefore a subjective comparison between them in terms of individual repercussions would be impossible, the idea of reviewing the context of violence within the novel would allow us to elucidate the characteristics of the power relationship that originally allow the reproduction of such acts. Arguably, the pain of the victims may well be unparalleled, but the felony of the perpetrators is.

In the first case, Yesenia is the victim of a double violence: a physical and a psychological-emotional. Using the typology of violence proposed by Sanmartín (2010):<sup>2</sup> the first refers to any injury inflicted on the body even when the main intention is to instruct and not precisely cause harm, although in this case violence exists anyway; while the second usually makes use of both verbal and gestural language. Yesenia's grandmother is directly responsible for the girl, so she is the bearer of authority that makes her feel empowered to exercise reprimands such as the one narrated in the following fragment:

[...] the grandmother saw the bruises and scratches, and all the chingadazos that Yesenia had to put on the chamaco so that it would be appeased then she received them duplicated in her own flesh, with the wet pita that the grandmother used to hit them, on the buttocks or back, or even on the jeta, if you were appendejabas and did not cover it with your hands, until Yesenia squealed and begged her to stop, to forgive her. (Melchior, 2017, p. 44)

This fragment allows us to understand how the grandmother-granddaughter relationship is involved in an inequitable dynamic of authoritarian parenting that not only ignores the contribution of the granddaughter to the domestic work that involves the care of the grandson, but also accredits her as deserving of a punishment for acting with agency before said work. Thus, the responsibility for the domestic is relegated only to the female part – conditioned solely for submission – while the male part is privileged by being immune from any domestic responsibility and even any hint of respect to which it was obliged as the other party involved in the upbringing.

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<sup>2</sup> This typology of violence is in turn a response to the typology proposed by the World Health Organization. However, as will be detailed later, both are insufficient for the purpose of a reflection that seeks to deepen the systematic scope of violence.



However, physical violence is only the first level of inequality that weighs on the oppressed gender between the two grandchildren. Subjective violence is surprising, of course, because in the aggressions of the narrative there are unquestionable marks of empathy, pain and indignation towards women victims of violence, and therefore survivors. But once we distance ourselves from this subjective violence towards an objective one, we are allowed to find the first elements of the patriarchal structure that contribute to the grandmother's brutal authority over her granddaughters; especially about Yesenia, who is the oldest of them. Thus, the novel narrates the following when Yesenia had tried to warn her grandmother about the vandalism that her grandson had been doing:

[... ] the grandmother had not believed him at all; the grandmother had been looking at him with eyes of fury and had said pinche Lagarta, nothing else could have occurred to you such a horrible and appalling lie, you are sick of the mind, you have it full of tares. Are you not ashamed to walk on the streets at night, and on top of that, blame your cousin? I'm going to take away your desire to run away, shitty shit. She had pulled her hair with the scissors of butchering the chicken while Yesenia remained motionless like a tlacuache under the headlights of the trucks on the road, for fear that the icy leaves would cut her meat, and then she had spent the whole night in the yard, like the bitch she was, the grandmother had said: the filthy beast that didn't deserve a neat jargon under its stinky skin. (Melchior, 2017, p. 49)

It happens then that the authority of the grandmother is rather the basis of a gender inequality that can be observed in the grandson-granddaughter relationship. While the man is indent to any bad behavior, women are repressed by physical punishment and verbal aggression. So psychological-emotional violence is also part of a clearly uneven balance; it is even the symbolic character of its mediation that makes it even more difficult to be dimensioned in the face of the damage it produces. What makes symbolic violence an objective violence, that is, systematically more cruel than subjective violence, is its ability to go unnoticed by reproducing certain harmful values that are normalized through incessant discourse. The constant humiliation of the grandmother who sentences with a pejorative tone the statements: "shame", "sick of the mind", "golfa", "unclean beast"; with these verbal aggressions, added to the specific acts of cutting her hair and leaving her sleeping in the





open, a speech of greater symbolic power is thus created than any physical act equated to an injury such as those she receives. All this in function of the disparate relationship between the predilection towards the grandson and the inquina towards his granddaughters, which is finally the result of a structural dynamic that subverts the feminine in pursuit of the masculine. As Segato (2010) suggests:

The maternal, the feminine, [appears] marked by participation in unrestricted satisfaction, and fusion to be disarmed, abolished; the paternal, or phallic, [appears] by the appropriation of the phallus by capturing for itself a parcel of maternal desire, as a powerful interceptor of that desire, and in this way, establisher of the law or limit and of the separation on which the possibility of living together within a social norm will depend...

From the mother figure the feminine is what is subtracted, the lack, the other, what is immersed in the unconscious, forming it. For its part, the masculine, the father figure, phallic and powerful because it captured a part of the mother's desire, allows satisfaction, but also knows how to cut it, interdict it, in the name of the law it establishes. (p. 70)

Thus, the unconscious desire of the mother figure, exercised by the grandmother, deposits its tutoring authority according to the traditional male status. She, subject to the structure of the desire of man over that of woman, is intercepted by this primacy of the dominant gender of power and predilecto par excellence, in this case with the advantage of obtaining trust in its majority or, rather, in its entirety. The grandmother becomes one more repeating link in the chain of violence that puts as the first victim the "other" gender: the feminine, for the benefit of the "gender" *per se*. Such primary sacrifice of the female body is what will be deepened in the next case.

Norma, barely twelve years old —possibly younger than Yesenia—, could be considered above all a victim of sexual violence according to a general typology of violence (Sanmartín, 2010). Although he also suffers from psychological abuse by his mother —also becoming at some point untenable his relationship with her— in reality it is the rapes of his stepfather that make up the central conflict of his testimony, and of course, the original cause of his flight. The stepfather's sexual abuse of Norma poses a very crude development that ends up becoming one of the most disturbing scenes in the novel. First, her stepfather begins to gain Norma's trust through special treatment that makes her





feel loved; some of them involve physical contact in the form of play. Then, during an afternoon when they were alone watching TV, her stepfather teases her because she had never kissed anyone, to which Norma responds with a kiss that he "[celebrates] with a laugh and a tickling session". (Melchior, 2017, p. 122).

From there he begins to sexually abuse her: first through physical contact, then genital and, finally, coital. Always by extorting the memory of that kiss that "she sought". The sexual violence of her stepfather coupled with the psychological violence of her mother, although incomparable to each other, results in a revictimization that means in Norma the anguish of a torture without exit of which she is considered the only culprit. An example of this is the following fragment where his mother's voice resonates:

[...] you are not a pendeja Norma, you should not believe them... you have to give yourself to respect because they are just going to get as far as you leave them... book until the good one arrives... a good man like Pepe... and Norma nodded and said yes, she would... that he would never succumb to his vileness... and at dawn, when she cried silently in bed, she thought that there really had to be something very bad inside her, something rotten and unclear that made her enjoy so much with the things she and Pepe did together, the days that he worked the third shift of the factory and came home in the morning [...] and he would go into the kitchen and take Norma away from the chores she was doing and take her to the foot of the big bed... and he stripped her naked even though she had not yet bathed, and he laid her down, trembling with anticipation and cold, on the icy sheets and covered her with his own naked body and squeezed her very tightly against her muscular chest and kissed her on the mouth with a wild hunger which Norma found both delicious and disgusting, but the secret was not to think... not to think anything when Pepe rode on top of her and with his coil smada of saliva was making bigger and wider that hole that he himself had opened with his fingers ... (Melchior, 2017, p. 133)

The first point that emerges from this case is referring to the very notion of "sexual violence" with which the abuse suffered by Norma was initially categorized. "Sexual violence is any behavior in which



a person is used to obtain sexual stimulation or gratification" (Sanmartín, 2010, p. 15). But to remain in this categorization would be to reduce the incalculable physical and psychological abuse suffered by Norma to a "purely" sexual act, and which ultimately happens to be "inherent" to the human. The category of what would seem above all a subjective violence of new account is the product of an impact that occurs before a very explicit scene of violence, which nevertheless prevents us from interrogating violence again. Despite being a fairly explicit approximation of the type of harm towards which the perpetrator's behavior is directed, in reality it is precisely the categorization of the harm that prevents highlighting the original aspects of the structure that perpetuates the context of this form of violence. Framing the sexual abuse of Norma's stepfather within gender-based violence would be more precisely linked to what Segato (2016) suggests as an order of power:

The expression sexual violence confuses, because although the aggression is executed by *sexual means*, the purpose of it is not the order of the sexual but the order of the power; ... it is not about aggressions originated in the libidinal impulse translated into a desire for sexual satisfaction, but the libido is oriented here to power and to a mandate of male peers or brothers that requires a proof of belonging to the group ... what endorses the belonging to the group is a tribute that, through exaction, flows from the feminine position to the masculine one, building it as a result of that process. (p. 18)

It should be clarified that the proposal of Segato (2016) is inserted on the central axis of what she calls "bloody rape": brutal rapes of women who usually end up being murdered with their body abandoned with impunity in the public space, and whose perpetrators are kept under the anonymity of an organized or symbolically collective *fratría*. However, as we will see throughout the analysis, the elements that make up the structure that allows these violations come from the same order as the cases related in the novel that are addressed here.

In such a way that the power dynamics produced and reproduced by the male gender is precisely what allows Norma's stepfather to rape her in the immediacy of the everyday, nothing less than under the supposed protection of what should be her home. First, because domination is



exercised from a paternalistic position in the supposed sense of complicity. For example, when the following is narrated:

Norma deserved it... she herself had been quietly asking for it all those years, hadn't she? Because there was that kiss that she had given him, as proof that she was the one who started it all. (Melchior, 2017, p. 134)

But the imposition of his will is not the only thing supplied by the stepfather through the alleged acquisition of authority, this imposition is directed towards a purpose: the finding of virility. That is why the desire for sexual satisfaction is set aside in the stepfather's own speech when scenes are narrated in which he intends to involve Norma's desire or will:

Mámame la verga, he said... do not make yourself the one that disgusts you although you like it, although it was not true, although Norma did not like it at all, but he said it anyway and she had never taken him out of the mistake. (Melchior, 2017, p. 121)

The subtraction of Norma's will — which paradoxically becomes incompatible with the normalized dynamics of violations; and this in turn goes unnoticed by the stepfather himself—it is a result of "it is more about the display of sexuality as a virile and violent capacity than about the pursuit of sexual pleasure" (Segato, 2010, p. 33). Thus, the ordering of power over the sexual translates into an abuse with projection towards that which sustains virility. The physical-sexual abuse of his goddaughter has never been the escape from a contained sexuality, but rather the realization of an order of masculine power that necessarily projects itself into the feminine. And, in the first instance, it is the fantasy of an authority conferred on him by Norma herself that configures the first bastion of his violent action.

The second bastion from which systemic gender violence looms is the next step to which all authority responds: the permissiveness of its power, or how far it can exercise its dominance. The truth is that there seems to be no moral limit or even self-imposed, because through his revictimizing speech the stepfather justifies the violation with which he very possibly tries to make him believe that no moral code is being violated in the act. Even in the mud of the most perverse violence



committed against a girl, the male conscience has the desire to absolve his guilt and go through in a pure, perhaps unpolluted way, that dirt that he himself produced. In such a way that the first thing he claims in his domain of power is precisely the apprehension of the female body as a territory of conquest. In this regard, Segato (2016) warns of the dimension taken by the two forms of rape that man exercises as a territory of conquest, one in the domestic space and the other in the public.

If in the shelter of the domestic space the man abuses the women who are under his dependence because he can do it, that is, because they are already part of the territory he controls, the aggressor who appropriates the female body in an open, public space, does so because he must do it to show that he can. In one case it is a finding of an existing domain; in the other, of an exhibition of capacity for mastery that must be republished with some regularity and can be associated with the ritual gestures of renewal of vows of virility. (Segato, 2016, p. 43)

Although the distinction is pertinent and enlightening,<sup>3</sup> in this context we find that both forms of dominance are not really quite far apart. In fact, the stepfather abuses Norma in his own domestic space, which he himself controls not only from the affective relationship with his mother, but above all since he felt he was the bearer of the investiture of authority over her. And in that house, which becomes its territory, it exercises its dominion through the body of Norma; but he does not do it only once, he does it through a dynamic of habit and verification in which he seems to ultimately renew his vow of virility, as would be interpreted as a scenario of "bloody rape" in the public space. Which in turn would be related to the form of violence of the last case addressed in the novel.

The femicide of La Bruja is not only the central crime of the plot for which the different testimonies are related. He is also the character that most surrounds him with an aura of mystery and uncertainty about his origin and his daily life, this without even presenting himself through his narrative voice like the rest of the characters; perhaps because of the criminal network that surrounds

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<sup>3</sup> Mainly taking into account that the anSegato's alysis (2016) focuses on the cases of femicides in Ciudad Juárez (Chihuahua, Mexico), which are largely composed of «bloody violations».



the narrative. Perhaps precisely because of that distance that is allowed from his perspective is the reason why a veil arises between his personal history and what we are told about it: black as the one he wore from the death of his mother to his own death, both full of dark circumstances. It is even until the last testimony, that of one of the two perpetrators of the crime, that we know the two motivations that led to the murder of the Witch: one of them sought to get hold of the supposed treasure that she hides in her house while the other wanted to take revenge for making her responsible for the abortion that Norma had had. This last character is about a supposed lover that the Witch had; in fact, she agrees to prepare Norma's abortive drink just because she was told that he, her lover, agreed. These personal motivations are referred to because they are the starting point of the violence with which the Witch is ultimately killed. However, in the novel it is also possible to find elements of violence that precede this last act of femicide, elements of a systemic violence that represent in the first instance the punitive oppression of the community towards its gender identity condition. These elements, therefore, are what allow the perpetrators to be able to consummate the violence as an ultimate degree of the scale of violence that the Witch lives.

In such a way that the first characteristic to take into account in this case is the non-heteronormative condition of her gender identity, this to say a first approximation regarding the female representation she assumes, which is disparate to the male phenotypes of her sex, thus causing some normative disruption for the community of La Matosa. Therefore, one of the uncertainties related to his person is the way in which he is usually described by the other characters: although during the first chapters he is simply referred to as "*the Witch*" -through female pronouns-, later it is revealed that he was *actually* a man. The character who first points out that distinction describes it as follows:

[...] He was actually a man, a man like forty or forty-five years old at that time, dressed in black women's clothes, and nails very long and painted black, frightening, and although he was wearing a thing like a veil that covered his face just by hearing his voice and seeing his hands one realized that he was a homosexual. (Melchior, 2017, p. 92)



In such a way that in the character of the Witch, transgender notions would appear, that is, those forms with which a person assumes a gender identity different from the sex with which he is born (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], n.d.). The characteristics that she appropriated to dress and express herself would allow us to highlight that her gender identification leaned towards the female gender. In addition, added to the disruption, his sexual identity would also differ from the normativity established by the patriarchal structure by being homosexual and having as a lover one of his future murderers; although with the distinction of possessing a different gender identity, in this case, that of the violently oppressed gender. This is why the important thing about this case is not their self-perceived gender identification, but rather the gender identity perceived by others. Well, both things happen before this: the feminine is the genre with which she is referred to throughout the novel, both in the chapter of her story and in those of the rest of the characters; but also, it is the disruptive condition to the normativity that places it under a specific domination of male violence that keeps it surrounded until it arrives in its lethal form. For Segato (2010), gender is not represented by an absolute categorization of "man" and "woman", perhaps different from the masculine and the feminine, it occurs rather from the external and internal identity relations of the person; that is, what for itself is considered and therefore what others consider of it: this would come to be called the "dominant fiction". Fiction because it is a construct – even though it is still complex and dependent on many factors – and dominant because the patriarchal system governs in absolutes and, despite the attempt to dissociate itself from it, gender ends up being confined to the feminine or masculine. The one becoming preponderant towards subordination and the other towards subordinating power.

In this way, the case of the Witch, being defined as "woman" even in otherness, does not totally leave aside the notions that were observed from the previous cases. She is also attacked in her private space: although not entirely through a domestic degree, her violence does represent a close degree of social proximity. Its perpetrators are not relatives or guardians responsible for it according to a paternity dynamic. But, in any case, it is two men who know her, and at least one of them comes from an intimate relationship with her. The lover, in fact, has personal motives for assaulting her. And



although the motivations of the other seem alien to their person and more linked to their property, the femicidal permission is still latent – mainly because of the female gender of which its victim represents. Thus, after violently attacking her in their own home, they both end up kidnapping her to take her to an irrigation canal and be able to dispose of her body, where they finally kill her. So her femicide crosses and exceeds the private, where as seen in the "bloody rape": the female body is abandoned in the space of the public as the last sign of male domination of power. It is not because the perpetrators have sought to explicitly leave a sign of their domination,<sup>4</sup> but that they unconsciously conceive themselves as possessors of a domination capable of outrage the female body and throwing it into the space of the public through a complete alienation in its most lethal form. This happens because

[...] in the language of femicide, female body also means territory.... in femicide the misogyny behind the act is a feeling closer to that of the hunters for their trophy: it resembles the contempt for their life or the conviction that the only value of that life lies in their availability for appropriation. (Segato, 2016, p. 47)

Thus, male domination perpetuates femicide as an extension of the ownership of the female body thus becoming an extension of what would be established since rape. However, it not only represents physical violence taken to the extreme of completion, it also involves the propagation of a message of violence: a statement of perpetuation that reproduces the permissiveness of gender violence. Well

[when analyzing] the violent act as a statement with communicative intent... [we discovered that the victim is not the] main interlocutor but the co-authors, partners in the enunciation. If we had to design a field of preferential dialogue resulting from the preferential *responsiveness* of the statement, this would be that of the other significant ones in the *fratria*, and not that of the *other* in the axis of the status relationship. (Segato, 2010, pp. 251-252)

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<sup>4</sup> The exhibition of the body as a sign of symbolic-territorial domination is precisely what Segato (2016) suggests in the cases of the hundreds of femicides of Ciudad Juárez. In this case, the border reality is a systematic violence that rather has to do with a power dynamic represented on a large scale within a patriarchal structure in the form of symbolically organized "*fratria*".





Finally, this is how it would be possible to put at least ellipses to all this violence, for which it would remain for a reflection on that communicative character that would allow the reproduction of the system. So that the violent act framed from a gender violence would act as a message of reproduction and contatation of the dominant misogynist order. In the novel this is exemplified in a passing but extremely powerful reference narrated from the perspective of Yesenia – the first of whom the analysis of her case was carried out. This part narrates about a video that not only manifests the most ruinous exhibition of gender violence in this system, but also represents the indiscreet and cynical propagation of a bloody act of violence in our contemporary context of the digital society:

[...] the famous video that everyone is going through the phone and where you can see the terrible things that the güero that does to the poor girl who appears in the images, a girl almost, a creature all sucked, who can barely keep her head raised from how drugged she is, or the sick, because they say that this is what those scumbags do to the poor girls they kidnap on the way to the border: that they put them to work in the whores as slaves and that when they stop serving for the catcher, they kill them like sheep, just like in the video, and they make cachitos and sell their meat in the inns of the road as if it were a fine animal to make the famous tamales in the region [...] (Melchior, 2017, pp. 50-51)

This brutal manifestation of gender-based violence is possible as long as the system of misogynistic domination and oppression continues to be legitimized through a channel of reproduction that contributes to the extension of its violent capacity. It does so through a subjective violence, so brutal and deafening that it does not allow us to move in discouragement, but if we stop to look at the form of a structure in this whole network of violence it is possible to find the symbolic connections that form a more objective perspective, a perspective towards a systemic violence.

### **The patriarchal system as a reproducer of a structure of violence**

Gender-based violence does not come from a fortuitously violent subjectivity of a pure and hard will. As we see it happening in *Temporada de huracanes*, despite its exacerbated nature, it is possible to



discover its anchorage towards a system of domination where the symbolic and structural makes sense. As Segato (2016) refers to these violences:

[...] they are not the work of individual deviants, the mentally ill or social anomalies, but expressions of a profound symbolic structure that organizes our actions and our fantasies and confers intelligibility on them... the aggressor and the collectivity share the imaginary of gender, speak the same language, can understand each other. (p. 38)

This system of domination is none other than the patriarchal system. The one that configures that gender violence is not only reproduced but above all alienated, inherent in all the processes of relationship and not only ascribed to the male gender; for also the feminine gender, as is the case here, can act as a subordinate link in the chain of misogynistic reproduction. The gender imaginary inserted in the patriarchal system is what *configures* that gender violence in *Temporada de huracanes* is part of the relationships of violence, this would also explain that even some women are the ones who get to exercise it. The grandmother acted as a repeater of physical and psychological violence exerted on her granddaughter; this also happens in the case of Norma's mother who threatened to get pregnant without knowing that her partner was her daughter's rapist. As in the context of our patriarchal society, there is no prototype of common violence from which purely evil or criminal factors emerge. It is rather the process of domination of the masculine over the feminine that privileges Yesenia's cousin, Norma's stepfather and the Witch's femicides over the integrity of themselves, even two of them being only in their childhood stage.

Gender violence, the violence exerted dominantly towards them, is what makes Yesenia betray her cousin, what causes Norma to flee her home, and what ends up causing the fatal fate of the Witch. But the latter with a primary difference: she is not allowed even one last action of escape, no spite of hope that allows her to even try to get out of oppression as Yesenia and Norma do. Thus, The Witch becomes the most abandoned victim of the specter of violence that occurred in the novel and, therefore, the central axis of the plot. She is not allowed to be a survivor.



It is this last aspect that is the final cry of the novel: the "colonization" that has been inherited from us outside the patriarchy. This is what ultimately allows for the final appropriation of the female body. This regulatory structure:

[...] patriarchy, or gender relationship based on inequality, is the most archaic and permanent political structure in human history. This structure, which shapes the relationship between positions in any configuration of prestige differential and power, although captured, radically aggravated and transmuted into an order of high lethality by the process of conquest and colonization ... The expression patriarchal-colonial-modernity adequately describes the priority of patriarchy as appropriating women's bodies and of patriarchy as the first colony. (Segato, 2016, pp. 18-19)

At the end of the novel, the body of the Witch is taken to the village's mass grave. The man in charge there, nicknamed "the grandfather", buries her while talking to her dedicating a speech of compassion and empathy, resulting in a kind of symbolic farewell to the bodies she is about to bury. This desire to engage in a final conversation with the victims—even though they were dead—symbolizes the return of the trace of humanity from which they had been stripped. For the latter, the dispossession of their humanity, is the very purpose of patriarchal colonization over the body-territory of women.

To conclude, it remains only to recover a part of the text of Zizek (2009) about violence:

[...] witnesses capable of a clear narrative of their ordeal would be disqualified for their clarity... Adorno's famous phrase would therefore need a correction: it is not poetry that is impossible after Auschwitz, but rather *prose*. Realistic prose fails where the poetic evocation of the unbearable atmosphere of a field succeeds. (p. 13)

*Temporada de huracanes's* prose evokes the realistic experience of unbearable violence precisely because it presumes to be totally sustainable in its most personal form, but also in its collective form. The testimonies with which we witness the closest violence are anything but consequential: an example is that the parts of Yesenia and Norma come and go in the narratological order according to



their attempt to evoke the most traumatic passages of the violence for which they have lived. Thus, the structure itself would have other key points to continue exploring the effects of violence on fictional storytelling.

From the present analysis what can be anticipated is that the systemic elements allow to order the violence according to the dominant social structure. These are precisely the ones that reproduce the same violent experience in many more violent experiences; a history of violence in many more stories of violence; a testimony of a surviving woman in many more testimonies of women survivors. Although finally, the reproduction of a systematic structure of violence allows us to understand above all that there are also stories without testimony of women who were prevented from surviving gender violence, which is established at the very heart of the patriarchal system.

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