

VIOLENT, REVENGE AND PSYCHOSOCIAL PRISON: SUBJECTIVITIES OF EX-COMBATANT WOMEN IN COLOMBIA

Violência, Vingança e Prisão Psicossocial: Subjetividades de Ex-combatentes na Colômbia

Violencia, Venganza y Prisión Psicosocial: Subjetividades de mujeres ex-combatientes en Colombia

Violence, Vengeance et Prison Psychosociale: Subjectivités des Ex-combattantes en Colombie

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Abstract

To talk about the violence is to talk about the subjectivities and to understand the importance of the meanings, relations and social practices. In this way, subjectivities are socially constructed and not only individually. Four women who belonged to illegal armed groups in Colombia were interviewed in this study and their stories made visible three categories that describe their subjectivities: 1. Violated subject; 2. Subject in revenge and 3. Subject imprisoned. The first one shows us how the violence generated an impact in the construction of their identities and how it made them vulnerable to decide to be part of illegal armed group. On the other hand, the women participants have been victim of the war. The violence through their life, promoted revenge feelings which mobilized them respond violently to the aggression received towards them or their loved ones. Finally, we observe women imprisoned since before entering prison, women limited, frustrated and dominated by others (psychosocial prison). It is clear that affective bonds (family and society) are a strong influence on the construction of these subjectivities and therefore it is necessary to work from the formation of them. It is also important to recognize the agency that all women have to transform themselves regardless of their starting point and their valuable contribution in the resignification of war.

Keywords: women; jail; subjectivity; armed conflict; violence.

Resumo

Falar sobre violência é falar sobre subjetividades e entender a importância dos significados, dos relacionamentos e das práticas sociais. Dessa maneira, subjetividades são construídas socialmente e não apenas individualmente. Quatro mulheres pertencentes a grupos armados ilegais na Colômbia foram entrevistadas neste estudo e suas histórias tornaram visíveis três categorias que descrevem suas subjetividades: 1. Assunto violento; 2. Sujeito em vingança e 3. Sujeito preso. A primeira categoria mostra como a violência gerou um impacto na construção de suas identidades e como as tornou vulneráveis à decisão de fazer parte de um grupo armado ilegal. Por outro lado, as mulheres participantes foram vítimas de guerra. A violência ao longo da vida promoveu sentimentos de vingança que os mobilizaram a responder violentamente à agressão recebida contra eles ou seus entes queridos. Finalmente, observamos mulheres presas desde antes de entrar na prisão; mulheres limitadas, frustradas e dominadas por outras pessoas (prisão psicossocial). É evidente que os laços emocionais (família e sociedade) exercem forte influência na construção dessas subjetividades e, portanto, é necessário trabalhar a partir de sua formação. Também é importante reconhecer a agência que todas as mulheres têm para transformar a si mesmas, independentemente de seu ponto de partida e de sua valiosa contribuição na ressignificação da guerra.

Palavras-chave: mulheres; cadeia; subjetividade; conflito armado; violência.

Resumen

Hablar sobre la violencia es hablar sobre subjetividades y comprender la importancia de los significados, las relaciones y las prácticas sociales. De esta forma, las subjetividades se construyen socialmente y no solo individualmente. Cuatro mujeres que pertenecían a grupos armados ilegales en Colombia fueron entrevistadas en este estudio y sus historias hicieron visibles tres categorías que describen sus subjetividades: 1. Sujeto violentado; 2. Sujeto en venganza y 3. Sujeto encarcelado. El primero muestra cómo la violencia generó un impacto en la construcción de sus identidades y cómo los hizo vulnerables a decidir ser parte de un grupo armado ilegal. Por otro lado, las mujeres participantes han sido víctimas de la guerra. La violencia a través de sus vidas, promovió sentimientos de venganza que los movilizó a responder violentamente a la agresión recibida hacia ellos o sus seres queridos. Finalmente, observamos a mujeres encarceladas desde antes de entrar en prisión, mujeres limitadas, frustradas y dominadas por otros (prisión psicosocial). Está claro que los lazos afectivos (familia y sociedad) tienen una fuerte influencia en la construcción de estas subjetividades y, por lo tanto, es necesario trabajar desde la formación de ellos. También es importante reconocer la agencia que todas las mujeres tienen para transformarse así mismas independientemente de su punto de partida y su valioso aporte en la resignificación de la guerra.

Palabras clave: mujeres; cárcel; subjetividad; conflicto armado; violencia.

Résumé

Parler de violence, c'est parler de subjectivités et comprendre l'importance des significations sociales, des relations et des pratiques. De cette façon, les subjectivités sont construites socialement et pas seulement individuellement. Quatre femmes qui appartenaient à des groupes armés illégaux en Colombie ont été interrogées dans cette étude et leurs histoires ont rendu visibles trois catégories qui décrivent leurs subjectivités: 1. Sujet violent; 2. Sujet en vengeance et 3. Sujet incarcéré. Le premier montre comment la violence a eu un impact sur la construction de leur identité et comment ils les ont rendus vulnérables à la décision de faire partie d'un groupe armé illégal. En revanche, les participantes ont été victimes de la guerre. La violence tout au long de leur vie a suscité des sentiments de vengeance qui les ont mobilisés pour répondre violemment à l'agression reçue contre eux ou leurs proches. Enfin, on observe des femmes emprisonnées depuis avant leur entrée en prison, des femmes limitées, frustrées et dominées par les autres (prison psychosociale). Il est clair que les liens affectifs (famille et société) ont une forte influence sur la construction de ces subjectivités et, par conséquent, il est nécessaire de travailler à partir de leur formation. Il est également important de reconnaître l'agence que toutes les femmes doivent se transformer indépendamment de leur point de départ et de leur précieuse contribution à la démission de la guerre.

Mots-clés : femmes ; prison ; subjectivité ; conflit armé ; violence.

The subjectivity is closely linked to culture, because this relationship is responsible for the historical, social and cultural character of all human productions, including love and war. As mentioned by González-Rey and Mitjans (2016), the concepts of subjectivity are impossible to be directly captured by the observable expressions of the other. This is because they represent the symbolic-emotional plot of the course of these expressions, but they are always beyond each of them separately. In this way, this article talks about a category that tries to explain how women ex-combatants linked to the armed conflict in Colombia define themselves.

The role of women in war has been little studied unlike the role of men in war. This corresponds to the stereotypes that occur around “being a woman” where everything related to war, conflict and violence has been associated with masculinity, the conception that man is aggressive by nature and woman pacifist, because of her mediating and caretaker character (Cerón & González, 2019; Mejía Jerez & Anctil, 2017; Salazar & Buitrago, 2019; Skjelsbaek & Smith, 2001). Only until a few decades ago, different authors began to develop their research in conflict theories, affirming the importance of taking gender into account in conflict contexts, transition to democracies and peace building processes (Skjelsbaek & Smith, 2001; Tuft, 2001). The role of women exceeds the role of “home” (Hyndman, 2004; Sylvester, 2010), to the point that they came to exercise activities assigned to the masculine in the war (Salazar & Buitrago, 2019).

We are facing a social problem rather than an individual that involves men and women as actors in the armed conflict. It is a social reality that is built by the actions of people, which in turn builds subjectivities (Aristizabal, 2017). These subjectivities are not built overnight but instead are determined by history and all the meanings that emerge around it. This reality makes visible a war that has perpetuated inequalities in Colombia for more than 50 years. As mentioned by Gallo and Jiménez (2002), war occurs because there is a disagreement regarding the distribution of material or symbolic resources that reflects different types of interests. On the other hand, Clausewitz, (2008) defines war as an act of force carried to its highest

levels of cruelty and used as a tax resource where one's own will prevails over the other (opponent), and whose purpose is to make the opponent more vulnerable and if it is possible to destroy it.

Colombia is the second country in the world with the most recognized and identified, atypical and sui generis armed conflict, after the confrontation of the Middle East in Asia and Africa who have social and religious roots. In the Colombian case, the origins are also political and social, but with the drug trafficking ingredient added, a phenomenon that has permeated different sectors of the community and created other factors of violence such as the sicariate and to financing the confrontation of illegal groups (Márquez, 2009). This war, a product of the armed conflict, clearly shows the power struggles and gender inequalities that have affected the social fabric for decades, making children and women more vulnerable, who went from being passive actors (victims) to being active subjects of violence (victimizers), without one category excluding the other. The subject who enters the war must have special conditions that imply exhaustive training (Sampson, 2001). These conditions can be framed in the presence of a figure of power that show the path and the norms of action, as well as the links that underlie this interaction and which in turn leads them to the submission of the other.

The findings presented here are within the framework of the doctoral thesis. Within the sample that represented this study, four cases of women victims of the armed conflict (demobilized) who were interviewed in the prison of Florencia – Caquetá (Colombia) were studied in depth. The main objective of this study was to analyze the subjectivities of women ex-combatant of the armed conflict in Colombia. We explore the practices of subjectivation that led them to be an active part of armed groups and the way context and history affected their identity. It started with the problematic question: How do ex-combatant women who were part of armed groups define themselves?

Method

Type of Investigation

Qualitative study with narrative design, framed in socioconstructionist perspectives (Gergen, 1985; Ibáñez & Jiménez, 2001), and gender (Almeda, 2003; Bodelón & Aedo, 2015; Butler, 2001; Harding, 2004; Pujal, 2005; Yagüe, 2007). From this position it was considered that the social reality is built by the action of people and that therefore we must approach the understanding of this reality (Burr, 1997; Gergen, 1985; Ibáñez & Jiménez, 2001; Potter, 1998).

Population and Sample

In the macro research from which this study emerges 94 women were interviewed in the prisons of Barcelona (Spain), Oaxaca (Mexico), Montevideo (Uruguay), Medellín and Florencia (Colombia). For the purposes of this analysis, four women interviewed were selected in the Florencia - Caquetá prison, who reported that they had belonged to an illegal armed group (IAG). The rest of the women interviewed had arrived at the prison for other types of crimes such as: drug trafficking, homicide, attempted murder, robbery, fraud, among others.

The women selected for this analysis were 38, 39, 41 and 50 years old and had belonged between 17 and 24 years to some illegal armed group. Two of them had been captured by the connection to the IAG, and the other two by selling narcotics after demobilized. All expressed in their speech stories of poverty, abandonment and family and social rejection.

The size of the sample was not fixed a priori (Neuman, 2009); a non-probabilistic or intentional sampling was carried out where profiles were searched for the diversity of personal and psychosocial situations respect to the crime, but finally this was subject to the voluntary decision of each of the women who were summoned. As proposed by Martínez, the interviewees were named “invited to participate” (Martínez, 2012, p.615) highlighting that the acceptance of each informant was a conceptually essential and ethically intrinsic element.

Methodological Procedure and Instruments

For this study, we worked with the stories of the four women who were in the prison of Florencia in 2016. This does not indicate that they were the only women in prison who had been part of a IAG, but were the only ones they voluntarily decided to participate. It is estimated that many of the women affected by the armed conflict were afraid to tell their life stories, because they thought that their names and their stories will be used for legal procedures that harm them. Although it was clarified to the summoned women that their names would be of the investigator's exclusive use, many decided not participate.

The methodological procedure was carried out through three stages: 1) Contact with the competent authorities of the *El Cunday* prison in Florencia, to explain the purpose of the study and obtain an entry permit. The same authorities shared the information to those invited to participate, tell about the informed consent and registered the names of those who

agreed to be interviewed for the respective purposes. 2) In-depth interviews, with the respective signatures of the informed consent; 3) Analysis of the data, writing reports and, 4) Presentation to the authorities about the results, who would share the information with the women inmates.

The narrative design was guided by a biographical approach (Bertaux, 1999; Cornejo, Mendoza, & Rojas, 2008) with in-depth interviews about the life stories of the women interviewed. This design allowed women to reflect on their own history, find strengths and weaknesses and in turn answer many of their own questions that had not been previously resolved. Each story shared a common point: people affected by violence that needed to be heard.

Analysis and Processing of Information

An analysis of the discourse was made through ATLAS.ti Software, focusing attention on the way in which the message is produced as a result of interpersonal dialogue in each of the interviews. The speech of each participant was analyzed from the contextual circumstances that included it, none of his words were taken in isolation. Special attention was given to all discursive practices that made some inference about the construction of subjectivity.

The fundamental interest was not measurement, but the understanding of social phenomena and processes in all their complexity. The place that the participants occupied within the social, cultural and historical context of which they are a part is of paramount importance (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006); hence the interest in knowing in depth the life stories of different women in different places of war.

The analysis was started by organizing the material and defining the axes of analysis according to the study objectives to proceed to the coding stage in which the raw data were transformed (transcription of the life stories) to useful data (emerging categories of the corpus). The name of the categories was given from the narratives and the bibliographical revision. All the interviews were recorded and then transcribed through *Scribe Transcription Software* following the criteria of Jefferson (2004). Since the way to obtain the testimony was based on open conversations, the selected paragraphs did not have the form of an explicit answer to a specific question (Moreno, Carmona, & Tobón, 2010) about subjectivity.

Ethical Considerations

All this process was materialized in the signing of an informed consent that was previously reviewed by the academic and ethics commission of the doctorate of the Department of Social Psychology of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, based on the ethical aspects pronounced in the Declaration of Helsinki and others (Acevedo, 2002).

Results and Discussion

Violence against women is an expression of the way in which subjectivities, identities and the social fabric have been constructed and reconstructed. This niche of inequalities that flow in the daily lives of many Colombian women is clearly visible in the contexts affected by the war. The life stories of women victims of violence, who at some point in their lives were part of the illegal armed groups, made visible the forms of expression of subjectivities: 1. Violated subject; 2. Subject in revenge and 3. Subject imprisoned (psychosocial prison).

Each subject is the correlate of their own practices of subjectivation, therefore, whenever there are new practices that create the conditions of possibility for transformation through the rules and norms that govern the situation, new forms of subjectivation are generated that transform into people (Aristizabal, 2017). Andrade and Moreno (2016) refer that each subject is constituted from the recognition of the other. The formation of the self needs another to identify itself as a different unit and just by seeing what he does to the other, he can see for his uniqueness.

These relationships will always be mediated by filiation and tension: the other is needed by the subject to constitute the self, who will henceforth be the representation of the coherent organization of the processes of subjectivation (Andrade & Moreno, 2016). The women interviewed did not identify themselves directly as delinquents but as victims of violence, of social inequalities that are presented as practices.

The analysis of the discourse of women affected by violence, clearly showed the construction of subjectivity fed by three states or three practices that integrate them. These practices of subjectivation do not declare a static or hierarchical state, but on the contrary they are produced and reproduced dynamically in a period of time that we call life.

Subject Violated

All the women interviewed expressed being violated since childhood. In their speeches, different types of violence were present: physical, psychological, domestic, economic, symbolic, among others. What is clear is that violence from the home, is incorporated into their lifestyles to assume it as their own, as natural, and sometimes as necessary. In other words, a violated subject is a subject that has been constructed and reconstructed by practices that attempt against its free development.

Authors affirm that in the process of parenting there is modeling and adoption of behaviors that persist in the future in the human being (López, Etxebarria, Fuentes, & Ortiz, 2005), behaviors that could be violent and that therefore tend to be replicated in later relationships. In this way, any type of relationship that is characterized by constant aggressiveness can negatively affect the subject and all its possible interactions (Garrido-Macías, Valor-Segura, & Expósito, 2017), generating long-term repercussions that prove to be costly for society (Alarcón, Araújo, Godoy, & Vera, 2010). This also involves children who have been recipients and / or observers of violence, who experience violence indirectly (Espinosa, 2004), but whose damage turns out to be as strong as if it were directly suffered.

Well, my childhood was very hard. Because my mom abandoned me when I was a baby. Well ... [weeping and silence] ... I was about 3 years old when she left us lying around! Three children she had, tied us up and left us ... My brother was about a year old and my brother was about 5 years old ... And then it was very hard because I had a big brother, then my dad got another lady and she treated us very hard. This ... There were men raped me ... I was bigger. Now, I remember, I was about 6 years old and they used to abuse us because ..., with my sister we also grew up alone, my dad worked a lot ... and he left with ... My dad had a daughter with another woman, he followed with his other daughter and his woman ... and she left us alone in that house ... And the neighbor went to the house and abused us. Even a big brother also abused us (Marisol, 50 years old).

Original version:

Pues mi infancia fue muy dura. Porque mi mamá me abandonó cuando yo era una bebe. Pues... [llanto y silencio]... ¡Tenía por ahí unos 3 años cuando nos dejó tiradas! A tres niños que ella tenía, nos amarró y nos dejó... Mi hermano pues tendría por ahí un año y mi hermano por ahí 5 años... Y pues ahí fue muy duro pues porque yo tenía un hermano grande, después mi papá se consiguió otra señora y nos andaba muy duro. Esto... me violaron... Ya estaba más grande. Ya, yo me acuerdo, yo tendría por ahí unos 6 años y abusaban de nosotros porque..., con mi hermana también nosotras también nos criamos solas, mi papá trabajaba mucho... y se iba con la... Mi papá tenía una antenada, el siguió con la antenada y la señora... y nos dejaba solas en esa casa... Y lo del vecino, pues iba y abusaba de nosotros. Incluyendo hasta un hermano grande, yo me acuerdo que abusaba de nosotras” (Marisol, 50 años).

The previous story shows the perspective of a woman who integrates the concept of “violence” with “hardness” (word that is repeated three times in a single paragraph: “hard”), and that finally translates a whole stage of her development into said word. A woman who was abandoned, and although it was an event that happened 50 years ago, through her “weeping and silence” is expressed in a category that is still valid. A battered woman who in addition to be abandoned, rejected also assumed physical violence: “tied us up”, and sexual abuse as part of her growth.

We are facing a cycle of violence where violent parents have probably been victims of aggression (Aranda, Ochoa, & Lezama, 2013). Thus, as from the primary experiences of violence, the development of insecure and unstable children is promoted (Romo, Anguiano, Pulido, & Camacho, 2008), which in turn makes them more vulnerable to the violence. According to Soldino, Romero-Martínez, and Moya-Albiol (2016) the transmission of abuse from generation to generation turns out to be more frequent in women.

In a patriarchal society like ours, a status has been imposed on the woman who defines her as “feminine” (Martini, 2012), including properties of affection, tenderness, submission, dedication to the relationship and care of her partner (Caro, 2008). In addition, women have been considered weak (Mejía, 2008) or labeled with an image of emotional instability, fragility and / or dependent on the other (Castro, 2004) which in turn forces them to act as such. Otherwise, they may be subject to rejection, contempt, devaluation, indifference, manipulation, imposition of behavior, intimidation, blame, and ridicule, attacks on self-esteem among others, which would be a type of violence that does not leave physical traces but deep psychological sequels (Deza, 2012; González & Santana, 2001; Taverniers, 2001) that interchangeably affect their relationship with the environment.

Not all the women interviewed faced all types of violence, but all constituted themselves as violated subjects:

My life has not been easy, I grew up in the middle of violence and we always had to run from one place to another. I saw how they killed my relatives and... they never abused me, but I saw it... I never felt like a guerrilla, but ... that was ... I am a victim

of this war (Clara, 39 years old).

Original version:

Mi vida no ha sido nada fácil, yo crecí en medio de la violencia y siempre teníamos que correr de un lado para otro. Yo vi como mataron a familiares y... a mi nunca me abusaron, pero yo sí vi... Yo nunca me sentí una guerrillera, pero ... eso era... yo soy víctima de esta guerra (Clara, 39 años).

Moreno and Díaz point out that the word “victim” has an evaluative burden that is associated with the effects that the violence brings to a subject. When the subjects are classified as victims, there is a risk that they may be understood as representatives of a predefined category and therefore their behaviour are conditioned (Moreno & Díaz, 2016). This recognition implies the risk that the classification as a victim is taken to the scope of subjectivity (Moreno, 2013). Other authors argue that the way people having experienced violence are labeled as a result of the armed conflict will mark their future actions with themselves and with others; in other words, all their relationships will be affected (Martín-Beristain, 2004; Meertens, 2006).

This category of “victim” is contradictory, since at the same time it indicates helplessness and passivity, they also give some strength to themselves to change their stories. Meertens proposes that it is necessary to rescue of survival strategies that give courage to overcome the experiences of horror experienced by people in situations of displacement (Meertens, 2006) or any type of violence that they have had to face.

I left the guerrilla on my own. After I came... the Alternative Revolutionary Common Force (FARC) ... Because I'm a defector, I do not belong to that group anymore, I'm not active, but I belonged to a group of it. Then what happens, my parents are thrown out of the region by the guerrillas; -Let's say the FARC did it, because I had been from that movement and since I did not belong to that movement, they thought that I would come and give me the army or to do so many things, because they always say that one already coming from the FARC is another enemy for the guerrilla. Then my dad was kicked out of the region; since then we walk with the suitcase on our shoulders, we are victims of the armed conflict... I belonged to a movement, but one day I made the decision to leave, I do not know where I took guts ..., but I did ... I did not want my younger brothers to follow my steps (Josefa, 41 years old).

Original versión:

Yo me salí de la guerrilla por mi propia cuenta. Después de que yo me vengo, las FARC... —porque yo me deserte, soy desertora, ya no pertenezco a ese grupo, no soy activa, pero sí pertencí a un grupo. Entonces que pasa, a mis papas los echan de la región, la guerrilla; —digamos las FARC los hecha a ellos, porque yo había sido de ese movimiento y ya al no pertenecer a ese movimiento, pensaron que yo me venía y me iba a entregar al ejército o quien sabe a hacer que tantas cosas, porque ellos siempre dicen que uno ya viniendo de las FARC es un enemigo más para la guerrilla; entonces a mi papá lo echaron de la región; desde ese entonces andamos con la maleta al hombro, somos víctimas del conflicto armado... Yo pertencí a un movimiento, pero un día tomé la decisión de salirme, yo no sé de donde tomé agallas..., pero lo hice... yo no quería que mis hermanos más pequeños siguieran mis pasos (Josefa, 41 años).

The reality of human beings develops in the environment of the meanings that compose it. In this way, if people define a situation as real, its consequences will be real (Thomas & Znanieki, 2004). Josefa's speech clearly shows an accumulation of adverse situations that occurred with her decision to withdraw from the IAG: the limitations found, the threats and uncertainty regarding the future. Despite all this, Josefa took “guts” over her fear, perhaps mobilized by the bond (love) that united her to her family and the hope of a new life. In this way, although external factors exert a great influence on the construction of subjectivity, there is the agency as the subject's ability to free himself from external automatic conditioning that in turn gives him responsibility for himself (Fernández, 2003). We conclude that the subjectivity of the women interviewed was given by a relationship of meanings, emotional ties (strengthened by love) and an agency to build new meanings.

Subject in Revenge

The stories of the women interviewed made visible feelings and actions of revenge that in one way or another were given by the identification as subject victim of the violence. To understand this relationship, it is necessary to know what revenge means for participating women, and in turn identify the elements that make it part of their own definition.

There was a lot of hatred inside me... I had a hatred against them, against my family, and even against myself. I was sick of the life I had... it was all war, violence, insults, abuse... [...] In the guerrilla I had the option of collecting revenge for my own hands... and it was something that went beyond me, which I could not control, but I wanted everyone to feel what I was feeling (Rosa, 38 years old).

Original versión:

Había mucho odio dentro de mí... tenía odio contra ellos, contra mi familia, e incluso contra mí misma. Estaba harta de la vida que llevaba... todo era guerra, violencia, insultos, malos tratos... [...] En la guerrilla tuve la opción de cobrar venganza por mis propias manos... y era algo que iba más allá de mí, que yo no podía controlar, pero quería que todos sintieran lo que yo estaba sintiendo (Rosa, 38 años).

According to Benyakar (2016) “hate needs conditions that allow it to not only discriminate against who will be its object but also to face it” (p.35). In Rosa’s speech, we found a subject who made the decision to face the hate generator and effect her destiny under the domain of her passions. A passion is revenge, which is distinguished by carrying a satisfaction in the return of the grievance (Benyakar, 2016), and thus “the grievance received finds a satisfaction and it is done with revenge” (Ramos, 2004, p.222).

Revenge is mediated by hatred and resentment and is distinguished because it can be directed “against an entity (the government, the company, etc.) or against a plural object (the rich, the powerful), or against life or the destiny, to those who blame their fate” (Bonnett, 2019, p.179). Ramos (2004) refers that revenge is the desire to make the other pay a damage produced that can lead to destruction. Revenge is “satisfied in the annihilation of the other and feeds on hatred, passion that affects the subject introducing it into an unstoppable spiral of barbarism” (Ramos, 2004, p.222). In the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE), revenge is defined as the “satisfaction that is taken of the offense or damages received”, and the verb to avenge: “take satisfaction of an injury or damage”; what corresponds to the expression of Rosa and other participants who describe revenge as the satisfaction of the damage received. Then, the question arises: where is the meaning of this apparent “satisfaction” called revenge?

I picked up waste of food, sold and..., until... I did not know about weapons, I did not know anything, I did not know anything ... [...] I would already have been around for 7 years old. Then there was a boy who was a militiaman and he fixed me a bicycle, and he told me: “On this bike, when you look at a truck and other say soldiers or paramilitaries, you run and tell me”. I said yes. So... he took care of me. Then there where the vicious, arrived a man and he raped me. Then, one day he (who was taking care of me) was not there, he was on his guerrilla missions, so later he told me: “They told me that they raped a girl around here”. Then a woman said to him: -Well, it was to her, to *pataloca*! (They called me *pataloca*, because I was fast and I was barefoot all time). And he said: “Violaron a *pataloca*?”. Then he sat with me and said: “What do you think about that?”. I said: -No, I’ve already gone through a lot of that. But I do not like that. Then he said to me: “You are too young for they do that with you, but one day you are going to take revenge of that”. I said to him: -Yes... I left that day, and in the afternoon he came and told me: “Pataloca, would you like to have a weapon?”. I said: -Yes. He told me: -Would you like to walk uniformed and armed?. I said: -Yes. Then he said: -I’m going to take you with me. And I said: -Yes. He took me to the guerrilla and I started at 8 years old. There I knew that I could take revenge for everything that they had been done to me and the life changed me (Marisol, 50 years old).

Original versión:

Yo recogía agua maza, vendía y..., hasta que... Yo no sabía de armas, no sabía de nada, no conocía nada... [...] Yo ya tendría por ahí unos 7 años. Entonces había un muchacho que era miliciano y me arregló una bicicleta, y me dijo:—En esta bicicleta, usted cuando mire un camión y que digan que los soldados o los paras, usted corre y me dice. Yo le dije que sí. Entonces... él me cuidaba. Entonces allá donde los viciosos, llegó un Señor y también abusó de mí. Entonces, un día él (que me cuidaba) no estaba, estaba en sus misiones guerrilleras, entonces me dijo: —Me contaron que por aquí violaron una niña. Entonces una mujer le dijo: —Pues fue a ella, a *pataloca*! (me decían pata loca, porque yo andaba rápido y descalza y todo). Y dijo: —Violaron a *pataloca*?. Entonces yo mire que le dio..., se sentó conmigo y me dijo: —Usted que piensa de eso?. Yo le dije:—No, eso yo ya he pasado por mucho de eso. Pero a mi no me gusta eso. Entonces me dijo: —Usted está muy pequeña para que hagan eso con usted, pero usted un día va a cobrar eso. Yo le dije:—Sí.[...]Yo me fui ese día, y por la tarde vino y me dijo:—Pataloca, a usted le gustaría tener un arma?. Yo le dije:—Sí. Me dijo: —A usted le gustaría andar uniformada y armada?. Yo le dije: —Sí. Entonces dijo: —Yo me la voy a llevar. Y yo le dije:—Sí. Me llevó para la guerrilla y empecé a los 8 años. Allá sabía que me podía vengar de todo lo que me habían hecho y la vida me cambió (Marisol, 50 años).

Marisol clearly represents two directly related categories: a violated subject and a vengeful subject that constitute its singularity. Disruptive events are clearly observed in her speech, which according to Benyakar (2016) can generate trauma or not depending on the position of the subject in front of the event and the meaning attributed to the event. Martín-Baró (1990) calls psychic trauma as “the particular wound that a difficult or exceptional experience (...) leaves in a specific person” (p. 10). Thus, socially produced wounds can generate psychosocial traumas that will impact each subject differently (Martín-Baró, 1990).

The same goes for revenge: it is unique in each subject since it involves the position it takes in relation to the damage received (Gerez, 2016). Revenge is not only the result of the damage or injury received, but it is also a figure constructed and assumed as its own in the interaction with the other. This element would not be possible without the affective bonds that produce and sustain it. In the face of a violent action, an outrage, or the endangerment of the existence of at least two subjects, the first reaction is to protect, defend one self. Then, if the affects put into play are discharged, a vent occurs and the affection is largely dissolved (Ramos, 2004). In accordance with what other authors mention, many boys and girls join armed groups because they want to “defend” or “avenge” their families against attacks from the other group (Carmona, Moreno, & Tobón, 2011; Hernández, 2001), in Marisol’s case, she took revenge for the damage caused to herself.

There is no general consensus on the reasons that lead us to go beyond the limits of respect for others to the point of their annihilation (Andrade & Moreno, 2016, p. 98). Obviously, revenge when assumed as its own, has different forms of expression that are mediated by the type and strength of the bonding. The stronger the affective bond or love, the stronger the revenge.

... I entered because I was hurt ... I wanted to escape, and by running away I got into another worse hole, [...] I wanted to take revenge on those who hurt me so much and those who killed what I most loved in this world (Josefa, 41 years).

Original versión

...yo ingresé porque estaba dolida..., quería escapar, y por salir corriendo me metí en otro hueco peor [...], yo quería vengarme de quienes me hicieron tanto daño y de quienes mataron lo que yo más quería en este mundo (Josefa, 41 años).

Josefa clearly reveals that revenge was promoted by the violent loss of the person she loved most. Clearly, the love directed her to revenge and the enemy defined her as a subject in revenge. The construction of an opponent allows defining the identity of a subject as it provides the possibility of facing it with value (of himself) (Eco cited by Gallo, 2013). Gallo (2013) states that the concept of the enemy becomes necessary, since it allows one to recognize oneself in relation to the presence of the other, that other as different from me and that gives way to the affirmation of oneself: one’s identity is defined and justified from the existence of the enemy, which becomes a motivator of revenge and violent actions. However, finally the feeling of revenge that links them to the enemy, ends up taking them to a psychosocial prison as in the case of Josefa: “I wanted to escape, and by running away I got into another worse hole”. Thus, trauma builds an identification as victims, which in turn becomes an argument for the exercise of revenge and encloses them in a psychosocial prison that limits their ability to identify new forms of productions.

Incarcerated Subject

Women were imprisoned before entering the prison, through bondings that limited them as they were regulated by social norms and gender mandates and the expectations that these generate (Aristizabal & Cubells, 2017). So far we have analyzed a subject that is conceived as a victim of violence, with feelings of revenge and it seems that such practices of subjectivation lead to the construction of a new category that henceforth is called “imprisoned subject”.

It could not be affirmed that the origin and development of this subjectivity is given in the violence practices that are produced and reproduced through relationships with others. Nor could it be affirmed that the incarcerated subject is explicitly the result of the violated subject and in revenge; because perhaps the prison imposed by the norms of the social system, and the historical-political and cultural conditions in which their bondings have developed, made them vulnerable to the violence and the feelings of revenge that arise in response to the threat.

We start from the assumption that subjectivity is constructed from the integration of the different elements that occur in the interaction of meanings, and in their relationship with the other. As mentioned by Carmona, Moreno, and Tobón (2011), the point of greatest rapprochement between the view of the interested parties and the subjects of study is the importance attributed to the role played by close interpersonal relationships. Therefore, come to understand the complexity of subjectivity, involve the recognition of affective bonds as figures that build or destroy.

Over there (in the guerrilla) my life was composed a little more because I learned there to handle weapons; they loved me because I was pretty ... Until ... a commander got me pregnant. I was about 12 years old and I was already pregnant. He told me he was going to take me to do the curettage [...]. And I said to him: - I do whatever it takes, but I don't want to do that [...]. I had that child, and they sent me to the distant villages to do intelligence, and I had a child. Until I had three children of him. Then he said to me at last: - They will punish me because you only get pregnant, and they will punish me and they will give me war advice, and both of them. That child is going to have to take it out. Then I said: —I'm already bored, tired, since I was born I have been suffered. I am not going to kill a son, I have already done a lot of damage and I am not going to kill him. If you are going to kill me, kill me, or if you are going to kill us, all at once. But it's your blood and it's my blood, and I'm not going to hurt my blood. Because my blood has hurt me and that hurts. And he's a son and I'm not going to do that. And I'm not going to do the curettage. [...] He convinced me ... (Marisol, 50 years old).

Original versión

Por allá (en la guerrilla) se me compuso un poquito más la vida porque yo aprendí allá a manejar armas; me querían porque yo era guapa... Hasta que... un comandante me embarazó. Yo tenía como 12 años y ya estaba embarazada. El me dijo que me iba a llevar a hacer el legrado [...]. Y yo le dije: —Yo, yo hago lo que sea, pero yo no quiero hacer eso [...] Tuve ese niño, y me mandaron para los pueblos lejanos a hacer inteligencia, y tuve el niño. Hasta que tuve tres hijos de él. Entonces a lo último me dijo: —A mí me van a sancionar. Porque usted solo resulta embarazada. Y me van a sancionar y me van a dar consejo de guerra, y a los dos. A ese niño va a tocar que lo saque. Entonces yo le dije:—Ya estoy aburrída, mamada, yo desde que nací he sido sufrida. Yo no voy a matar un hijo, yo ya he hecho mucho daño y yo un hijo no lo voy a matar. Si usted me va a matar, máteme, o si nos van a matar, de una vez. Pero es su sangre y es mi sangre, y yo a mi sangre no le voy a hacer daño. Porque a mí mi sangre me ha hecho daño y a mi me duele eso. Y es un hijo y yo no voy a hacer eso. Y yo no me voy a hacer el legrado. [...]El me convenció... (Marisol, 50 años).

The previous testimony shows us the testimony of a woman in a psychosocial jail, imprisoned by the canons of beauty: “they loved me because I was beautiful”. A woman imprisoned in the imposition of the other “I do everything...”, “He convinced me”. A woman who loses her freedom, submits to another and did not see other exit options.

If we review the previous testimonies that were included in other categories, we also find elements that point to the existence of an imprisoned subject in a psychosocial jail: women imprisoned for the oppression of their relatives and / or others for having been violated since childhood, imprisoned for feelings of revenge, which lead them to ignore their aggressive actions as their own, and “to lost” their self-control and agency to free themselves. The term “to lost” is included among the quotes because their capacities are not really lost, it is only made invisible to let other action promoters guide them.

Marisol's speech also overcomes the fact that a subject who has been violated does not have the opportunity to relate outside of the position of victim (Ordóñez & Moreno, 2013). Marisol used her agency to free herself and although later new bars obstructed her vision, it is worth mentioning the feat that led her to liberate herself.

I ran away and I went for my children who were already big ... [...]. When I left, I did not find work, I did not know what was worse, if being in the guerrilla or being a poor woman. I looked for work until construction job and they said not because I was a woman. But God helped me and I met people who believed in me... who did not see me as a guerrilla, as a dangerous one, but as someone who deserves to get ahead (Marisol, 50 years old).

Original version

Yo me escapé y fui por mis hijos que ya estaban grandecitos... [...]. Cuando salí no encontraba trabajo..., no sabía qué era peor, si estar en la guerrilla o ser una mujer pobre. Busqué trabajo hasta en construcción y no porque yo era mujer. Pero Dios me ayudó y conocí personas que creyeron en mí..., que no me veían como guerrillera, como una peligrosa, sino como alguien que merece salir adelante (Marisol, 50 años).

Again we find the mobilizing effect of love (“I went for my children”) and the impact this may have on the subjectivity of each person. Marisol's speech shows us how difficult it is to get out of a psychosocial jail, where overcoming a barrier (“I ran away and I went for my children”) she meets others barriers (“I did not know which was worse, if being in the guerrillas or being a poor woman “), many of whom were not under her control. This subjective position in which the woman is between two barriers: poverty - guerrilla, leads her to make a demand for help to another person (whom she mentions as “God”), who in the words of Ordonez and Moreno, is a “requirement of salvation, rescue, attention “(Ordonez & Moreno,

2013, p. 119). This demand arises from the positioning as a victim, in revenge and imprisoned subject and that according to Marisol's speech could be considered as the exit to her psychosocial prison.

Conclusions

The analysis of the life stories of the incarcerated women who were interviewed in this study is a reflection of the social practices that promote violence in Colombia and strengthen its replication. The subjectivity of women has been constructed from a patriarchal society that has complied with its norms of action and has led the formation of subjects who perceive themselves as victims of violence, with feelings of revenge and imprisoned among the barriers that hinder their free development. If it is a process through which more egalitarian subjectivities are constructed (free of violence from the cradle), everyone assumes responsibility for caring for the other (Gilligan, 1982), which in turn represents the payment of a more solid social fabric and stable for the sustainable development of future generations.

It is clear that the affective bonds (family and society) exert a strong influence in the construction of these subjectivities and therefore it is necessary to work in the formation of the same, but in turn an agency in each woman that allows the adequate change of the point. An understanding about subjects not like victims, like subjects that recognize their history and their customs, which give them the responsibility in the reparation process and the restoration of their citizenship (Jaramillo, 2006).

As Ordóñez and Moreno mention it: "when a subject has experienced some type of victimization event, it begins to be part of his life history but nevertheless the place he occupies varies from one subject to another, therefore, in this elaboration of the violent fact, the mechanisms that each subject has or builds are put into play. This elaboration is crossed by the relation of the subject with his desire and the relationship with the other "(Ordóñez & Moreno, 2013, p.140). In this way, although acts of violence exert a strong influence on subjectivation practices, they are not exclusive conditions; appear and reappear the affective bonds and the meanings that emerge in these relationships like key elements of production and transformation.

The women who participate in this study let us see that not all subjectivity is built on the basis of violence and hatred, but also on the basis of love (Rosolato, 2004). For love they were victims, they took revenge and they were imprisoned; but also for love they decided to leave the IAG, for love they asked for help, they talked about their stories and they rethought themselves. As Aristizabal and Cubells (2017), affective bonds (mediated by love) are so powerful that they can take women to jail and they can also get them out of there. Burín and Meler (2001) describe love as something "subjective" where the meanings that the subject attributes to it but also the social conditions that nourish it intervene. Likewise, violence, revenge and psychosocial jail are subjective categories that not all ex-combatant women experience in the same dimension. In this study we try to approach the subjectivity of women and along the way we find elements that unite but also divide. Not all links are mediated solely by love or only by violence, they seem to be categories so distant that they complement each other and that could be deepened in future research.

Women who have defined themselves as subjects of violence, feelings of revenge and imprisoned among the barriers of the system, are also women who love, dream and struggle to identify and make use of the empowering resources they transform. As proposed by Meertens (2006), it is necessary to rescue the survival strategies that show the courage and honor with which victims overcome the experiences of horror that women affected by violence have experienced. Subjectivity is not a static position that accompanies all of life, it is the result of multiple interactions between meanings that entail the capacity to be renewed and transformed.

Understanding the subjectivity of women affected by violence who were part of an illegal armed group, invites reflection that every woman (for the fact to be woman) could be in the same position as the women participating in this study. Micro-violence is no less harmful than macro-violence, both are considered subjectivation practices and both are the result of the interaction between subjects in their struggle for power, and much more when they permeate a patriarchal society such as ours. Transforming such practices is more complex when the affective bonds chosen in a deeper sphere of meaning exert a tension towards revenge and imprisonment. In the line of transformation, it is necessary to select bondings that empower and promote peace and nonviolence practices. Finally, these findings contribute to the understanding of an issue that involves us all: the construction of peace and the resignification of war.

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