



# UNVEILING THE LINK BETWEEN INTERPRETATIVE REPERTOIRES OF ROMANTIC LOVE AND SEXIST VIOLENCE: AN ANALYSIS OF YOUNG ADULTS' LIFE STORIES

*Matthew Taylor and Jessica Miller, Department of Journalism, University of  
Washington*

## **Abstract**

The present article analyzes the relationship between the interpretative repertoire of romantic love and gender violence. We conducted eight life stories with young people between 25 and 35 years old (3 boys and 5 girls), focused on their relationships. We have resorted to discourse analysis, specifically the analysis of interpretative repertoires. This approach has allowed us to identify, characterize and analyze the interpretative repertoire of romantic love. The results show how romantic love's interpretative repertoire guides to appropriate ways of feeling, helping heterosexual, romantic, monogamous and long lasting relationships that are the basis for patriarchy, generating the conditions of possibility for the emergence and maintenance of gender violence.

**Keywords:** gender violence; interpretative repertoires; metaphors; romantic love.

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## **Introduction**

1. This research analyzes the discourses on romantic love, focusing on the identification and analysis of the effects of interpretive repertoires (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1988). The results presented in



this article are part of a larger investigation, titled "Romantic love and sexist violence" funded by the Catalan Institute of Gifts (ICD) 1, which has the general objective of analyzing the relationship between the use of the [interpretative](#) repertoire of romantic love and erotic-affective practices.

2. In this article, the approach to emotions is based on the socio-constructionist perspective, the Foucauldian conception of power (Foucault, 1976, 1979) and the feminist contributions of Judith Butler (1988, 2001), Sandra Harding (2004), Pierre Bourdieu (2000), Margot Pujal (2005) and specifically on romantic love and/or its relationship with violence from a feminist perspective by Eva Patricia Gil and Imma Lloret (2007), Eva Illouz (2010) and Mari Luz Esteban and Ana Távora (2008).
3. The socio-constructionist view of emotions by Tomás Ibáñez and Bernardo Jiménez (2001) and Lupicinio Íñiguez, Rom Harré and Simone Belli (2010) proposes a critical approach to the most traditional and hegemonic theories of emotions. From this perspective, discourse does not describe reality, but rather constitutes it—this is what is called non-representational epistemology—(Harré, 1986; Harré & Parrott, 1996). In other words, when we talk about emotions, we do not describe them but rather we construct them.
4. Foucault's conception of strategic power (Foucault, 1976, 1979) shows us how power is immanent in social relations, does not come from a hierarchical authority and is productive of knowledge. Feminist analyzes introduce the idea of an order, as well as the structuring of the androcentric and patriarchal world, where a relationship between men and women marked by male dominance is maintained (Bourdieu, 2000; Pujal, 2005). This androcentric and patriarchal order permeates and reaches the



most intimate part of the individual: his subjectivity and/or transformation, configuring his own desires, her needs; what Foucault has called practices of subjecti- vation (Burr, 1997; Foucault, 1988). Becoming a subject means being subject to a set of norms (Butler, 2001; Foucault, 1988). Judith Butler (2001) exposes the relationship between power and subject in the *Psychic Mechanisms of Power*. The author understands power as an external element of subordination over the subject, and power as a psychic form that constitutes the identity of the subject.

5. In this article, the objective is to: identify the repertoire of romantic love, analyze it as a social practice that constructs subjectivities and explore its use as a condition of possibility for the emergence and maintenance of sexist violence <sup>2</sup> . Sexist violence is understood as violence that occurs in the context of erotic-affective relationships between people socialized as men and women, which represents the expression in the intimate space of unequal, socially legitimized relationships, according to Eva Patricia Gil and Imma Lloret (2007). ).
6. The analysis of interpretive repertoires focuses on the strategies used when constructing a narrative. Potter and Whetherell (1987) proposed the concept of interpretive repertoire to explain the linguistic mechanisms that we resort to in order to construct our versions of the world. In this way, interpretive repertoires are drawn as strategies aimed at constructing, with a specific purpose, a specific representation of reality.
7. If we focus on our Western, capitalist and patriarchal context, some of the characteristics of our erotic-affective bonds have to do, according to Carlos Yela (2000), with the validity of passionate love as a normative



and legitimate way of relating (Goode, 1959 ; Hendrick & Hendrick, 1992; Liebowitz, 1983; Simpson, Campbell, & Berscheid, 1986; Stenner, 1993, 2005), with the paradox that implies basing a stable structure— couple, family—on a feeling—falling in love—with a tendency to be ephemeral (Bauman, 2005; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001), freedom in choosing a partner, despite social pressures in this regard; normative heterosexuality and the difficulty of establishing a bond of friendship between men and women, subtlety in seduction (Cook & McHenry, 1978),

In Spain, different studies have been carried out to understand the validity of the myths of romantic love <sup>3</sup>, arguing that there is a wide acceptance of them (Cubells, Calsamiglia & Albertín (2010), especially among older believers and younger people, regardless of their sex (Barrón, Martínez, de Paúl, & Yela, 1999). According to the study by Bar-rón et al. (1999), women are slightly more romantic and give more importance <sup>to</sup> fidelity That men.

The relationship between romantic love and sexist violence has been previously studied (Cubells, Albertín, & Calsamiglia, 2010; Cubells & Calsamiglia, 2013; Ferrer & Bosch, 2013; Sarasua, Zubizarreta, Echeburúa, & Corral, 2007). In these works, the myths and/or the interpretative repertoire of romantic love are considered as one of the factors that contribute to the appearance and/or maintenance of violence in the couple (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2001; Garrido & Casas, 2009). Mari Luz Esteban and Ana Távora (2008) maintain that romantic love is an intrinsic part of women's subordination and that to carry out a situated analysis and/or give rise to transformative practices, it is necessary to include the gender perspective. This way,

## Methodology



From the socioconstructionist perspective, it is assumed that social reality is constructed by the actions of people, and that it must be known through understanding (Burr, 1997; Gergen, 1985; Ibáñez & Jiménez, 2001). Thus, an approach was made to the reality that we wanted to describe by doing a critical and rigorous epistemological exercise, based on information collection techniques that approximated the language and relationships of the different agents involved. At a methodological level, a discourse analysis was carried out, specifically an analysis of the interpretive repertoires (Potter & Whetherell, 1989), as explained in the previous section.

To carry out the study, life stories of young people were collected, produced in an interview that sought to know the social through the individual. It is based on experience, taking into account that it is part of the community being studied, according to Daniel Bertaux (1984) and Franco Ferrarotti (2007). The selection of key informants in this study is the result of a convenience sample—selection based on the objectives set in the study and the possibility of access to the informants. The participants were contacted through the snowball technique, based on personal and professional contacts of the research team and by going to information and care services for women (SIAD) in the province of Barcelona.

The field work was carried out during 2011, in Catalonia, with a total of 8 interviews with people between 25 and 35 years old with different erotic-affective situations, as detailed in Table 1. Pseudonyms were used to reference the textual quotes. that guaranteed anonymity. The saturation criterion was used to establish the number of life stories that make up the corpus of the study. According to Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967), this refers to the fact that we consider that we have sufficient data when new information stops

appearing in the interviews. The field work was carried out in Barcelona, in Catalonia - one of the Autonomous Communities of the Spanish State - in which there are two official languages (Catalan and Spanish).

Software was used for transcription (Sounds-criber) and analysis (ATLAS.ti), following Jefferson's transcription criteria, which allow recording aspects of non-verbal language such as pauses, emphasis, sounds and interruptions (1984, 2004). This type of transcription requires literalness and prevents correcting the usual forms of oral expression. For this article, the Catalan fragments were translated into Spanish, to speed up reading and optimize space.

### **Results**

The analysis of life stories allows us to identify the main characteristics that make up the interpretative repertoire of romantic love, that is, the rhetorical strategies that people use to account for the world around us and our experiences. These include the beliefs and values learned uncritically in the socialization process, and their relationship with decisions, emotions and experiences. By analyzing the metaphors and rhetorical strategies used, one can access the system of norms that—uncritically assumed—subject us, guiding the ways of feeling, thinking and acting (Butler, 1988, 2001; Foucault, 1976, 1979; Pujal, 2005). .

### **Characteristics of the interpretive repertoire of romantic love**

The main characteristics of the romantic love repertoire identified are the use of metaphors, mechanisms for externalization (Potter, 1998) to talk about love, the use of linguistic strategies aimed at amplifying (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1989) and maximizing (Potter, 1989). , 1998) the feeling.

### **The use of metaphors**



Metaphors have been approached from different areas, such as cognitive linguistics with the theory of conceptual metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003) or new rhetoric (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1989). However, for this article we start from the sociometaphorical analysis of Lizcano (1999), because it is interesting to carry out a social as well as linguistic analysis of the use of metaphors. In this section, the theoretical assumptions of this author will be developed to understand what was the basis for analyzing the use of metaphors. According to Lizcano, "metaphors are a powerful social analyzer, because they inhabit the discourse, going unnoticed, structuring its internal logic and content" (Lizcano, 1999, p. 29). The author understands metaphors not only as a linguistic activity, but also as:

"an activity in which the context and experience of the subject of the enunciation are revealed (...) a social, concrete subject - historically and socially situated - (...) who selects some metaphors and discards others depending on factors social" (Lizcano, 1999, p. 31).

In this sense, "the systematic analysis of concepts as metaphors is a privileged way of accessing the social substrate that structures the discourse," states Lizcano (1999, p. 31), based on and citing other authors such as Nietzsche (1994). ), Foucault (1968, 1978), Derrida (1968) and Lakoff and Johnson (1991, 1998).

The metaphor is based on an analogy, starting from the subject as the origin and the term as the destination of the metaphorical displacement. Living metaphors are those metaphors in which we are aware of the underlying analogy. They respond to the instituting process and connect with the cultural sensitivity of a specific, socially and historically situated context. When this occurs, the metaphor becomes generalized and becomes used by a linguistic





community. With the generalization of the use of a metaphor, it becomes a habitual, proper expression and is no longer considered metaphorical. It acts as a social institution, being assumed as a fact, naturalized. What was initially an analogy can be dissolved to be understood as pure equality between its terms. Many concepts that we use on a daily basis are metaphors that we have forgotten are metaphors. Lizcano calls them zombie metaphors, since they were alive when there was awareness of their metaphorical nature, but when they move into common language they cease to be identified as metaphors, although they maintain the connotations and implicits of the relationship between subject and term. Zombie metaphors account for what is established. Next, the zombie metaphors that have to do with romantic love, which is the case at hand. Zombie metaphors account for what is established. Next, the zombie metaphors that have to do with romantic love, which is the case at hand. Zombie metaphors account for what is established. Next, the zombie metaphors that have to do with romantic love, which is the case at hand.

In the field work carried out, different metaphors were found to talk about love, to which other authors also refer (Barcelona, 1992; Glucksberg & McGlone, 1999; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003), namely: love as work, love as a path, being loved as an ideal, love as a container, love as a construction, love as property and love as hunting. Likewise, many metaphors were found to talk about the way of feeling love in the body. The analysis will focus on love as hunting, because the focus of this article is the links between romantic love and sexist violence. In the metaphor of love as hunting, expressions such as flirt, trap, trap, throw the rod, attack or launch were identified, which are analyzed later.

Hunting involves an action (hunting), performed by a subject (the hunter) and directed at a prey (commonly an animal that is hunted). The action is at the



initiative of the subject and for his benefit. The prey is treated as an object, its will being denied. If, following Lizcano, the metaphor is considered as access to what is instituted, at the same time that it is instituting because it is given as an assumed social fact; Talking about love in terms of hunting implies assuming the use of certain forms of violence in the relationship. The characteristics of the <<hunting>> action require that the subject exert some type of violence on the prey, including actions such as monitoring or controlling, chasing, trapping, setting a trap, wounding, attacking and/or killing.

By using the metaphor of love as hunting, love is being related to inequality of power and the use of some type of violence. In a patriarchal context, the figure of the hunter is assimilated with the characteristics of masculinity and the figure of the prey with femininity, taking into account the heteropatriarchal gender roles in which we have been socialized, respectively (Bourdieu, 2000; Gil & Lloret , 2007; Pujal, 2007). Understanding love as hunting implies an inequality between the parties involved, an important difference between the capacity for agency, which connects with the subordination of women in love and with the exercise of violence (Esteban & Távora, 2008), creating the conditions of possibility for the normalization of violence within the couple.

Suffice it with the definition of the Dictionary of the Spanish Language: "prey (From the lat. press, part of garmentre, 'to catch, grab'.) 1. Action of seizing or taking something. 2. Something captured or stolen. 3. Animal that is or can be hunted or fished (...)". Flirt The words flirt or flirt frequently appear in life stories to describe the action and effect of establishing temporary love or sexual relationships or the person with whom these relationships are established. Even so, the definition of bind, which comes from the Latin ligare, refers primarily to 'to bind'.

References to the first meaning of flirting, understood as a zombie metaphor, can be seen in the following quotes, referring to relationships without explicit commitment. In the first quote flirts, in the plural, implies that the speaker has a relationship with different people, without connoting a commitment to any of them. On the second date, two of the girls interviewed establish a dilemma between having a boyfriend or partner (which implies a committed relationship) or having a relationship (which does not imply it).

I took advantage of the office to take **my flirts** , it was with views of all of Sabadell. (Miquel, 26 years old)

And that not everything comes down to whether you have a boyfriend or you don't have a **boyfriend** or have you **flirted** or haven't you **flirted** ? (Caro, 29 years old)

But yes, in adolescence when I imagined a partner and then I could approach them for a **hookup** or something else (Bego, 32 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

There is a paradox in the use of the lexeme lig-, which means 'binding' and evokes union, and the connotation of non-commitment when we talk about linking (in Catalan, lligar). In Catalan, the word lligam literally translates as ligature and is used colloquially as a synonym for bond, referring to the union, passion and commitment in the relationship. On the occasions when this is referred to in the interviews that were carried out, this metaphor is used to show the difficulty of leaving the relationship, as occurs in the following quote:

I **left** it, it cost me a lot (0.5) because there was a lot, a lot ((ts)) a lot of unity, right, too? A lot of passion with a lot of commitment and a lot of (2) I don't know, it's like a bond, right? We are for each other and we support each other, right? This point a lot and what happened is that in the end we didn't speak the

same language at all (1) and **I left it** (1) yes. Notice that I had to take advantage of the fact that he went on vacation to... (Paula, 29 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

The feeling of bondage that appears as desirable or as the norm when used as a zombie metaphor. At the moment in which the metaphorical meaning, already forgotten, becomes a literal bond, undoing the metaphorical displacement, is when love is experienced as a bond from which one cannot break away when one wants, but only when they let it: Violent?

In some way, violent or not, but they made you feel bad, they generated some discomfort. No, of course, it was this. In the relationship it was this, in general discomfort (1) No, yes, jealousy and what: you try to tie me **up** , right? If not, come with me :: but it was very strange because he didn't do without his life. (Caro, 29 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

In this fragment, the discomfort in the relationship due to the couple's jealousy is expressed. Indeed, jealousy—often minimized and naturalized—is used to justify violent behaviors such as control and attempts to tie the other person down.

In the interviews carried out, different ways of presenting oneself as the object or subject of the flirting action were found, in accordance with gender mandates. In the following fragments you can see how the figure of women is presented as an object. In this fragment a woman describes taking care of herself with the goal of being beautiful, as a way to attract men.

(...) and then, when I was alone (...) well, I dedicated a lot to myself (1) you know? I was (3) good, because I pampered myself, I exercised **to be pretty** , [...] and but (...) I always noticed that I was missing (...) someone (1) from the

field of love, with whom to share my life , I always noticed he was missing. (Marisela, 29 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

On the other hand, we see how a man is proud of the physical attributes of the woman with whom he has flirted, whom he presents as a trophy.

Yes, I was happy because I had a girl who **was pretty** , who had **big tits** , who was with me and **people saw me** with , and so it was very pretty. (Jesús, 26 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

### Trap

A trap is deliberately set for hunting; Whoever hunts clearly has an objective with the installation of it, and the prey cannot escape from it. Continuing with love as hunting, there are metaphors that specify the feeling of being trapped or having been set up.

This, then we were together again, then I was super cool again and then after a while I was back, maybe I felt **trapped** again. (Ana, 28 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

The expressions used for trap are usually: set a trap, fall into the trap, get out of the trap. In the following quotes there is no reference to cheating, but it is implicitly mentioned.

I say oysters, don't **fall** again [into the trap], you won't be in love again, I say no no no, man no, it's just that I get this protection from him and I say damn and no but well, that's it, and little by little I got over it. (Marisela, 29 years old)

But, but of course, he knew how to seduce me, [...] and I just fell, it's very easy **to fall** [...] **I fell** again, but all these last months I already I already saw it

very clearly, [...] but I still couldn't **get out** (Ana, 28 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

### **Attack and forms of attack**

Several metaphorical forms referring to the attack or the forms of attack were found in the corpus. One of the most used metaphors is that of casting the rod, an expression that refers to the action required to fish.

(...) I met him with him through a mutual friend, it was his birthday and (1) and it was his birthday and the birthday of this mutual friend, and we were standing at the table eating, and he was in a corner, with a boy next to me who was trying **to hit** me , and he was in a corner. (Marisela, 29 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

On the other hand, in the interviews reference has also been made to the attack as a way of expressing the initiative for rapprochement between both people. This initiative, attributed to man in the socialization process, is in line with the results that were analyzed.

(...) well, exactly, I met him on the street, saying we've met up and then we saw each other, not much, I continued living in my house, he in his:: we went seeing each other, we went seeing each other, we We ended up flirting, he **attacked** , and then in the end I was fine with him, I was excited to be with him and (1). (Marisela, 29 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

### **Hitch**

Enganchar has different meanings that will be addressed throughout this section. The etymological origin of the word enganchar is hook. The words hook and hang are used to refer to erotic-affective attraction.



And he asked me why I wanted to kiss him, right? And I, well, because I like you and so on, but you like me like, how do you like me? I mean, it's like he wanted to get information from me and maybe it's too early to tell you what, and I told him, man, I really like it - I think well, very strange, right? And then I felt like I had to ask permission for everything before doing it, I don't know, very strange. But it went very well, and sexually it went very well. This is a point of **attachment** , he works hard, and then it's cool, because he's I don't know (...) this is a point of **total attachment** , and this, and then... it was cool because the next day It was also nice, he told me, go stay and eat, no, it wasn't something cold, come on, I have to go. (Ana, 28 years old)

(The bold are from the researchers)

Engagement is meant as a difficulty in putting distance in the relationship and a certain lack of control over positioning in it. Thus, it also refers to the difficulty in distancing and/or disengaging from the relationship. This is expressed by several of the people interviewed.

So I was in love with him for two years or so, and then he started dating my best friend, and I had to swallow it. I told my friends that I was in love with him, and my friends (...) from class (...) you join him told him I don't know what and this grated me so much. I said I don't like it anymore. But I still liked it. But I had said I don't like it anymore. But she was still very **hung up** . (Ana, 28 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

In the following quote, hooking refers to addiction. The woman expresses her dependence on the relationship with the use of the metaphors hookup and hard drugs. At the same time, this addiction is related to the difficulty of leaving an abusive relationship.

This relationship, which is the one you explain as less happy, with abuse, is it the one that has cost you the most to leave?

Of course, the abuse is what makes you unable to leave it, I mean you are **hooked** , I recognize it, directly, I was hooked on **hard drugs** , and I knew it, and I was aware, and I couldn't get out. (Ana, 28 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

This analysis refers to love as hunting, where the subject is the hunt and the term is love. When a metaphor is used, profiles and content of the subject are given to the term. In this way, you can learn more about a hitherto unknown area. This knowledge of more emerges from the connotations and implicit knowledge that one has about the subject from the term. Love as hunting is based on several analogies: the hunter is to the hunt as the lover is to love, or the prey is to the hunt as the beloved is to love.

In the course of the analysis carried out on the metaphors of the corpus, the relationship between the metaphors about romantic love and sexist violence was evident. This relationship is specified in the existence of a subject (hunter) and an object (prey), and the difference in power between both positions. Indeed, the metaphors used show how the hunter (lover) uses strategies to hunt or fish his prey (beloved). Once the latter feels trapped, she has difficulty escaping even when the relationship she is in is violent or unhealthy. In this analogy of love as hunting, love can be read as violent insofar as we could replace the lover with the aggressor and the beloved with the victim, without affecting the meaning. This way,

### **Mechanisms for externalization**

Steve Woolgar (Latour & Woolgar, 1995) provides the concept of externalizing mechanisms, referring to the strategies that allow us to interpret that the





phenomenon described—in our case, love—exists independently of the agent who makes the description (Potter, 1998).

In the following fragment, a woman describes falling in love using externalizing mechanisms:

Falling in love would be the moment in which you realize that you begin to love that person (...) and it creates an **emotional disorder** in quotes (...), right? Because I suppose things happen that surprise you, or you do things that perhaps you didn't think you would do, or you feel things emotionally or physically, which then maybe (...) yes, of course, it's the cliché, eh, of falling in love and love, but I guess that's how I understand it too. I feel yes, it is the moment when you start to realize that (...) you want something more with that person and that (...) it makes you feel (...) more special? Maybe? (Caro, 29 years old) (The bold letters are from the researchers)

Firstly, it shows falling in love as an entity independent of the person who feels it, presenting itself as an external observer: "you realize that you begin to love that person." Secondly, it gives the feeling the ability to cause emotional upheaval in the person who feels it, in this way, it again reinforces the idea of love as external to the person.

Another strategy to present love as a feeling external to the person is to describe its appearance as inevitable or that it bursts into one's life irrationally.

I was (...) madly in love, platonically, with a guy from the university, with someone who was doing a doctorate. And I had my friends who told me, when you cross paths, he looks at you, and you look at him, and there is a spark that jumps, and I am convinced that (...) that it was mutual, what happens is that he had a girlfriend. (Marisela, 29 years old) And this story was very nice, a super



nice guy. And I, it was also me, the one who left him, well, here I was the one who one day met another boy and had a thing like we met in another life, we met again and like a very heavy thing, and I I hooked up with this guy, and when I talked to him and told him, we didn't leave it, but it didn't go well again, did it? (Woman, 32 years old)

In the following fragment, one of the men interviewed describes falling in love using the metaphor of falling in love. Once again, the crush is presented to us as external - it is Cupid who shoots - and irruptive with the capacity to provoke a strong feeling towards the person who is the object of love: "Yes, the crush is: aaahhhh! she is the woman of my life ( Carlos, 35 years old)".

In the following quote, the same young man explains falling in love as a feeling that erupts as a chemical reaction in the body itself, thus embodying the emotion felt. Likewise, this embodied feeling "makes you nervous all day and lose your nerve," which constructs the person in love as someone who has lost their agency:

At the moment I was going towards where we had met, I once again noticed that **tingling here in my belly**, like the first times when you are in love. (Miquel, 26 years old)

It's a damn **chemical reaction in the body** that makes you not eat and makes you nervous the whole day you **lose your oremus** . (Carlos, 35 years old)  
(Bold letters belong to the researchers)

The use of the interpretative repertoire of romantic love is not exempt from effects that will revert to the way romantic relationships are experienced: the fact of presenting love as a phenomenon that occurs independently of the desires of the people who feel it constructs it as irrational, magical and beyond all conscious control.



Well yes, to find (...) a person with whom I suppose that what I am looking for (...) is the (...) to feel some things that I have felt some couples of (...) hug someone and feel that you are in connection with that person (...). Yes: (...) like, like (...) very spiritual, right? To feel at peace for being (...) with that person (...) and lose track of the physical, right? With this connection. (Paula, 29 years old)

The construction of love as irrational, magical and out of control favors the conditions of possibility for the maintenance of the romantic relationship even when it is unsatisfactory and/or violent. The irrationality with which love is built gives rise to contradictions, such as knowing that the relationship hurts you and at the same time not being able to leave it; or mixed emotions when still in love with the person who carries out the aggression. In the following fragment a woman relates her relationship in this sense.

Of course, the abuse is what makes you unable to leave it, I mean you are hooked, I recognize it, directly, I was hooked on hard drugs, and I knew it, and I was aware, and I couldn't get out, and Do you know- do you know what conditions had to be met for it to come out? Total support from: from people around me, otherwise I couldn't, in fact I often thought:: because of course, I had moments of lucidity that I saw very clearly, I have to leave, this can't be, and I'm not okay here, and This guy doesn't do me any good and okay (3) and I remember some nights that I was thinking this and the next day, furthermore, when we live in the same house, because of the three years we have lived in the same house for a year and a half house, then the next day he came to you there super cool, super smiling, super seductive, very nice: super good person, In addition, he has improved some things that I have told him, which he has improved (...) superficially, so this makes it even more difficult (...) because I believe that the abuse remains the same underneath, but superficially it seems

that it does. He treats you well and takes you into account, and in the last few months he did take me more into account, and listened to me more, and was by my side as if it were like requests that I had made of him, he made these efforts. (Ana, 28 years old) he made these efforts. (Ana, 28 years old) he made these efforts. (Ana, 28 years old)

Likewise, the experience of love as something that breaks in and disrupts our lives favors the tendency to abandon activities and friendships to make room for love. This is the concept of renunciation highlighted by several studies on the myths of romantic love (Barrón et. al., 1999).

Conscious (...) no. In other words, be aware now, I have abandoned myself, yes, that is, I have stopped being me, now on a physical level - on a material level, for example, things to see (...) friends ( ...) friends, it's not that I have left you aside (...) right? for love (...) well, the only thing that I am aware of that I have left behind is myself (...) which is a lot. (Bego, 32 years old)

### **Rhetorical strategies that amplify sentiment**

Anita Pomerantz (1986) states that people resort to extreme cases to describe situations in an interested way, that is, maximizing or minimizing the facts or arguments that we want to highlight. In the following fragment, the woman interviewed maximizes the feeling of love while presenting it as external to her through the use of a metaphor.

The first crushes were (...) like in the seventh, eighth grade of primary school, when I fell in love very much with a boy in class, a boy, right? It's just that at that moment (1) And well, I liked him a lot (1) and then in the end one day he told me, well, we were like very close friends and in the end one day he asked me if I wanted to go out with him and that was like an explosion maximum, right? It was like a brutal happiness (...), right? And now that I think about it,

right? Then, over time. We were like (...) ((ts)) in quotes together because we didn't do anything like that we didn't do anything but we were like symbolically together and then he already: he (...) liked the usual one again and told me of course I know that. (Ana, 28 years old)

The metaphor explosion followed by the adjective maximum presents the feeling of love as something that appears suddenly (explodes) and is very intense. In fact, the feeling is so strong that it cannot be stronger; it reaches maximum intensity. In this way, the woman establishes a relationship of correspondence between this feeling and happiness that is again maximized with the adjective brutal. In this fragment, she can see the figure of presence—by reiterating the same idea in the same phrase—amplifying the feeling described. In short, maximum happiness seems to come from finding love as other studies also show (Fraser, 2003; Parv, 1997).

In the following fragment, the woman presents love as a very intense feeling: she maximizes the intensity with the use of the adverb of quantity very and the superlative adjective super in front of intense. Likewise, the effect of presence is achieved with the repetition of the word intense and intensity. On the other hand, in the phrase "I cried with him making love", the use of the verb cry denotes the expression of a very strong feeling. In this sentence, the fact of highlighting that you have cried while making love with him implies that you have not cried in the same situation with other people, so that by implicit comparison it constructs the idea that the feeling experienced with this partner is more intense and special.

(...) and the first time we did it, I **cried with him making love** , you know, no Yes, yes, very intense. It was **very intense** , then, and now with time, I don't remember this, I mean, I remember, but it makes me angry, I wish I had a little

box here to save all the feelings, you know, already past, and live them again with the same intensity that I experienced them, because I swear that one of the things that I have a memory of was (...) super intense. (Bego, 32 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)

In the following fragment, the man interviewed emphasizes the effect of falling in love on himself, by using the superlative adjective super in front of the adjectives that describe his state when he is in love—happy and euphoric. Likewise, with the expression "in the moments when you are emotionally centered", he implicitly constructs the idea that when he is in love he is not emotionally centered. In this way, it results in the idea—presence effect—that falling in love produces a disorder in the person who experiences it. Again, he presents the infatuation as external and uncontrollable.

It's beautiful and terrible at the same time, eh, m because it really is beautiful and you are super happy and super euphoric and on the other hand it is terrible because when you have moments when you are emotionally focused you say I'm damned, I haven't done that or I haven't fact what, totally why. (Carlos, 35 years old)

### **The interpretive repertoire of romantic love and subjection**

In the interviews carried out, we found the repertoire of romantic love from which the people interviewed build and re-signify their erotic-affective relationships. This construction and re-signification of relationships generates certain expectations and desires about how they should be. These expectations and ideas about what love should feel like act as norms that hold us down, marking what practices are accepted and acceptable (Butler, 1988, 2001; Foucault, 1976, 1979; Pujal, 2005). When for some reason these norms are

transgressed, the people interviewed explain having felt some type of pressure, either explicitly, or a discomfort that would be the result of implicit pressure. In short, in the socialization process, the repertoire of romantic love produces subjectivities insofar as the norms and expectations about love are assumed as their own so that authority is located within the subject itself through the ways of feeling. . Social norms end up being imposed as an obligation that must be fulfilled, their internalization implies a normalization of them and therefore they are accepted without too many questions, as shown in the following quote: "He had to hook up, did he? No? (...). It was what I had to do. But I didn't feel it was an obligation, eh?" (Paula, 29 years old).

In the following fragment, the young woman states that she receives explicit pressure in the form of coercion from her mother for not following the commands considered appropriate in her erotic-affective relationships:

We left it because **my mother** (...) **coerces me a lot** . (...) and it prevents me from doing many things and it marks me a lot and I am still not completely let go, and the issue of intimate relationships, I am very good, well, yes, we slept, but (Marisela, 29 years old )

(The bold are from the researchers)

Sometimes, not having a partner is a source of implicit pressure, as shown in the following paragraph:

And I'm fed up, a **beautiful, young and intelligent girl, what is she doing without a boyfriend?** It's just that what's wrong with kids nowadays? Until one day they told me again and I said <well, I can't find anyone up to the task>. (Caro, 29 years old)

(The bold letters are from the researchers)





In this fragment, it is implicitly assumed that the couple must be of the opposite sex, complying with heteronormativity. Likewise, she is not just any girl but rather a "beautiful, young and intelligent one", standardizing what attributes make a woman desirable. In this sense, if the young woman is beautiful and intelligent and does not have a boyfriend, she feels strange. Continuing with the model of the man who hunts for the woman—who appears as prey-object—the explanation must be found in the men who do not know how to value her, "what is happening to the boys today." The woman interviewed resists this pressure, abandoning the position of object in which she is placed, placing herself as her subject by explaining that she is the one who "cannot find a man to match." In this fragment the differential construction of the genre is made visible, Women have to be beautiful, young and intelligent to attract a man - since they are not expected to take the initiative in the relationship, having been assigned a submissive role in the relationship with the other sex. Men, on the contrary, are given an active role in the search for an erotic-affective relationship and are expected to take the initiative.

The differential construction between both genders is also observed in how the limits are established. In the interviews carried out, women appear more submissive when their freedom is restricted, placing fewer limits in situations in which they feel discomfort. On the contrary, men are less tolerant. In the following fragment, a young man explains that he broke up the relationship because he could not tolerate the control that his partner subjected him to and the prohibition of maintaining contact with friends and ex-partners.

(...) she was Argentine, that was (1) that can be said quickly, and easily, and ugly, that was all a mistake, hahhaha yes hahhaha (2) she forbade me from speaking to my friends, to my ex-girlfriends, She hacked me, she hired a hacker



for my Facebook accounts and for my email, so that they could hack my passwords and she would check those things for me, so for a while she kept me hacked and asked me questions like what do you know about your ex-girlfriend, and I , no no no, I did know that we wrote to each other, but what are you going to say to the girlfriend, right? Yes, she wrote to me yesterday, she told me that she is a fucking mother (...) no! So, XX, I don't know, an ex-girlfriend, ok ok, she kept me like that for a few months and one day she told me hey and, I know that you correspond with so and so and with so and so and that you don't tell me anything, I asked you and you told me nothing, just like that, He already told me that he already knew why he had me hacked, and so on, but well (...) a disaster, he hacked my accounts, there was. (Jesus, 26 years old)

In the following fragment, a young woman shows tolerance by giving the relationship another chance again and again.

Of getting angry if I had gone with I don't know who, but he felt and was devastated. (...) and I left him several times [but then he came back], he had a terrible time and yes, I left him because I felt trapped (...) I remember. I remember that I wanted to expand, I don't know, to see the world and that with him I couldn't because when I did something with someone else he would get angry, with the other, but, but he would look like shit and maybe he would say something like that to me. and I, and I always had to go there, I wasn't very insecure, I always had to go and say no but if I did like you, I always had to go after him and tell him. (Ana, 28 years old)

### **Conclusions**

In the interpretative repertoire of romantic love, according to the analysis carried out, it is observed how the use of metaphors, the mechanisms for externalization and the rhetorical strategies that amplify the feeling refer to what



is instituted and what is instituting in relation to romantic love. From the analysis of the characteristics of the repertoire, some relationships can be established between it and violence in erotic-affective relationships.

The metaphor of love as a hunt refers us to the inequality of power between the people involved in the romantic relationship, based on subject-object and the inequality between the construction of masculinity-femininity, in the same direction that other authors point out (Esteban & Távora, 2008; Gil & Lloret, 2007; Pujal, 2007). At the same time, the act of hunting itself involves the use of some form of violence. The use of this metaphor can minimize, make invisible and/or normalize violence in erotic-affective relationships, because the very metaphor used to talk about love is consistent with the use of violence.

The externalization and amplification strategies of love construct it as an intense, irrational, magical and out of control feeling. These characteristics legitimize and/or justify that love is related to other intense, irrational or out of control emotions, such as jealousy, possession or anger. These emotions can take the form of violent practices, such as expressions of jealousy, emotional blackmail, control of relationships, unauthorized access to virtual messages or social networks, etc.

In this way, the repertoire of romantic love guides the appropriate ways of feeling, thinking and acting, favoring heterosexual, romantic, monogamous and long-lasting relationships, and generating the conditions of possibility for sexist violence within the couple. Thus, it generates subjectivities convenient for the reproduction and maintenance of heteropatriarchy, through norms uncritically assimilated in the socialization process. Subjection to the rules becomes evident through the very reproduction of the interpretative repertoire of romantic love,



as well as the discomfort or pressure that is experienced when the rules are transgressed.

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### Footer

<sup>1</sup> Institut Catala de les Dones/Catalan Women's Institute: body that designs, promotes, coordinates and evaluates policies for gender equality developed by the administration of the Genralitat de Catalunya, the Catalan autonomous government.

<sup>2</sup> This article focuses only on sexist violence in the sense proposed in the text and according to the laws that regulate gender violence in the Spanish State (LO1/2004, of December 28, of Comprehensive Protection Measures against Violence of Gender) and sexist violence in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (5/2008, of April 24, on the Right of Women to Eradicate Sexist Violence) and other forms of violence in the couple are not analyzed.

<sup>3</sup>The term myths of romantic love is used to refer to studies that use this name. Talking about myths implies assuming a dichotomy between truth and narration (myth). Placing ourselves in the socio-constructionist perspective, we question this dichotomy and choose to talk about interpretative repertoires about romantic love.

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