

## Social pain, violence, and inequalities

By *Rebeca Cena*

This issue of RELACES brings together a series of writings that, from different approaches, problematize social pain, suffering, and violence. Within the framework of life and death organization regimes, the writings grouped here warn the ways in which the regulation, distribution, and consumption of bodies become nodal in capitalism. Being more than instruments of mediation of emotions, bodies are the ways of experiencing, belonging, and being in the world. All social behavior is assumed and made possible from and through corporeal materiality, so there is no possible social action without a body. These thus occupy a central place as the locus of conflict and order. Well, the human condition is eminently corporeal. Hence, they are presented as privileged sites of control, in such a way as to delimit, enable and encourage certain ways of acting/feeling.

From the ways in which the human species is assumed, passing through institutional violence, classification and labeling processes, up to death, the organization systems of contemporary life suppose a certain body politics. Social norms, customs, material conditions of existence and institutional traditions signify, and enable certain emotional behaviors and restrict others (Gordon, 1990; Hochschild, 2001). In this direction, the articles gathered here cover the naturalized institutional violence -and occluded as such- exerted on people (see in this issue the article by Bengoa and Tijoux), the processes of classification, labeling, and self-diagnosis of people with illnesses linked to mental health (see in this issue Grippaldi), gender stereotypes and the standards of what is beautiful, healthy, young and useful (see in this issue Bitencourt, Brito and Silva, Wenez, Silveira and Amoêdo, and Sassatelli), the link with life, consumption, nature, and death (see in this issue Drivet). The regulation and order of bodies and emotions constitute a central aspect of the conformation of current societies.

The ways of being, living, inhabiting, and feeling the world are the product and producers

of certain social structuring processes that signify and give meaning to them. Emotions, and the ways of expressing them, dialogue with class positions and conditions, languages, rules of conduct and interaction, gender, etc. social factors that orbit the bodily/emotional sphere.

The constitution of bodies/emotions, and how actors relate to and experience the world, although they can be analyzed as inherited neurophysiological responses, are linked to social models and schemes. Emotions, from this perspective, do not have so much to do with individual and individualizable processes -although they are narrated in the first person as the most intimate and proper thing that happens to the subjects- rather they are constituted as a result of historical, social and cultural constructs, expressed through a network of symbols from which subjects can infer meanings. The way in which the actors experience the world that surrounds them, although it has something individual and subjective - as sensory terminals of a corporality - they also have, at the same time, a language that can be recognized by peers (Le Breton, 2002).

The bodies/emotions, in this way, are linked to social models and schemes that in this issue are problematized for the approach to social pain and its various manifestations. This is presented as a category that allows us to notice various human problems that have origins and consequences that are linked to the processes of social structuring. Product of vital experiences questioned by situations of inequality and relations of domination, social pains allow us to describe and explore the connections between subjective and structural aspects. The processes of naturalization of violence are anchored and make suffering flesh, expressed as the systematic ignorance of society as a whole of each expression of the social issue. Material conditions of existence, social structuring processes, and vital experiences are woven into social pain from the distances between needs and the means to satisfy them, between

classification schemes, labeling, and division of society, and between the production of life and death. The occlusion and naturalization of violence have an impact on “the social pain [that] is transforming, it becomes body first and then callus”. (Scribano, 2007: 129)

Social pain, violence, and inequalities are addressed in this issue as gateways to the ways in which conflict permeates and configures the ways of being, and inhabiting the world. Bodies/emotions are traversed by different registers linked to inequality and exclusion in accumulation regimes. This issue, in addition to being an invitation to “look” at the different ways in which bodies/emotions are presented and structured, has been an attempt to problematize various axes. All this with the purpose of calling into question and in tension the regulation of life in the present century crossed by violence, social pain, inequalities, death, etc. Simultaneously, the articles proposed here allow us to reconsider the importance of approaches that focus on, from, and with bodies/emotions. In this way, looking back on social pain, violence, and inequalities is an opportunity to make visible the different problems that are presented, expressed, and staged today. The ability that the Social Sciences demonstrate to make them visible and/or occlude them will be an option closely linked to how much and with which critical categories we dispute.

The first of the writings is proposed by **Ana Bengoa and María Emilia Tijoux (Chile)**, entitled “**Violence and social suffering: elements for a denaturalization of violence from captive testimonies in the prisons of post-dictatorial Chile**”. From a process of inquiry on the criminal issue in Chile, the writing reflects on violence and social suffering. The reproduction of violence and what they call the confinement circuit, are approached in the article from the analysis of the criminal policies of post-dictatorship mass incarceration. The writing is oriented to make critically visible the web of institutional violence that has been naturalized and occluded. Repeated, daily and systematic violence occurs under systems of organization, production, and reproduction of life that stress the Rule of Law and the Human Rights paradigm.

“**Becoming depressed. Biographical accounts of depression labeling in users of mental health services in Santa Fe, Argentina**” is the second article in this issue and is proposed by **Esteban Grippaldi (Argentina)**. Mental health services, suffering, depression, and self-labeling are plotted in this article that analyzes biographical stories of people

from the middle sectors who admit to suffering from depression. From a sociological approach, the paper reviews the results of empirical research that investigates how and through what resources people come to consider themselves depressed or depressed. Self-labeling is central to these situations perceived as emotional problems, with the perception of the emotional situation assuming greater weight than the labeling of experts. In a scenario, then, marked by biographical hyper-reflexivity, people interpret their sufferings in the light of psychiatric notions, which transcend specialized discourse, the product of a self-deciphering based on the use of categories derived from expert systems.

**Silvana Maria Bitencourt (Brazil)** is the author of the third article in this issue and it is entitled “**Ethnographing the emotions of a group of elderly pilates practitioners in Buenos Aires (AR)**”. From an ethnographic approach, this article is the product of the observation of Pilates classes and reflects on the care of the body of elderly people. The practice of Pilates is presented not only as an opportunity to become aware of the body, but it has also enabled other forms of sociability such as those linked to community actions, participation in social events, parties, demonstrations, etc. The article also incorporates expressiveness and art in social research as a strategy for the observation of the body and the production of emotions. It concludes that this type of analysis contributes to promoting future research based on an interdisciplinary approach between the human/social sciences and the health sciences.

“**Images and body meanings of the aging body for older Chilean women**” is the title of the fourth article and is proposed by **Jennifer Brito and Marta Silva (Chile)**. Images are explored throughout the writing. and meanings about the body in Chilean women over 60 years of age, based on a systematic review of magazines, websites, and specialized books. Subject to multifactorial discrimination, women of the so-called third and fourth age are enrolled in a society that has promoted the erasure of the aged body. Reinforcing labels such as fragility, the neoliberal and consumerist system have described old age as in tension with the maximum socio-cultural productivity and vitality. Within the framework of multiple discriminations, the study shows that women express experiencing processes of exclusion as a result of a demand from the environment that requires preserving the beauty, and a youthful and healthy appearance. Old age is represented by erasing or hiding the corporal marks of time, operating as a value judgment in personal identity and in the self-

worth of people.

The fifth article is entitled **“Dancing wards off worries: Equality in the song “Tous les Mêmes”**” and is proposed by **Ileana Wenetz, Viviane Teixeira Silveira and André Paiva Amoêdo (Brazil)**. Gender stereotypes and division and classification schemes are the product and producers of bodily practices, sports, and even cultural artifacts. As part of the latter, the songs and choreographies incorporate some social meanings attributed to the body, to what is classified as masculine and feminine, they operate by reproducing or resignifying them. The article works from Feminist Theories and Cultural Studies that approach post-structuralism, with the purpose of mapping how some gender meanings were and are attributed to corporal practices labeled as masculine and/or feminine in society. Culture appears as a heterogeneous space for negotiation, in which the song, among other cultural artifacts, participates as one of the elements that constitute social meanings.

**Leandro Drivet (Argentina)** is the author of the sixth article entitled **“Pandemic (and rebellion) on the farm. Reflections on the disavowal of the biological blow of universal human narcissism and its ecological implications”**. The product of an analysis of the preliminary agreement between the Argentine government and the Chinese state to expand pork production, the article reflects on the theological and economic-political foundations that hinder the path towards ecological justice. The problematization of the cultural presuppositions that shape the currently dominant human disposition towards nature, which implies the denial (or denial) of it, constitutes an argumentative path of the author. The writer concludes that the human species is the agent and host of the most deadly pathogen for global biodiversity: capital. The challenge is to break with this way of organizing life and death, where private interests prevail, based on collective learning that has been historically denied. This begins by addressing the historical and cultural determinations that have structured the dominant and divided disposition of the human species before nature.

**Roberta Sassatelli (Italy)** proposes the seventh paper entitled **“Gendered Bodies. Notes on Embodiment and Gender”**. There the author works on gender and corporeality as two fundamental elements of the contemporary sociological understanding of subjectivity. Bodies have a historical and cultural anchor that, in dialogue with gender, enables the inscription of social action in a certain time and space. Gender enables embodiment and constitutes a category to understand how society, through interaction,

institutions, and culture, dialogues with the ways in which we live, feel, and manage our bodies. The article concludes by identifying that the embodiment of gender differences is a process that naturalizes sexual differences, often fixing it as inequality. Bodies and power relations are therefore closely linked, so the body is presented as a fundamental dimension of our societies.

Two reviews close this issue, the first of which is entitled **“LatDisCrit: questions about the Latinx identity of disability”**, by **María Paula Zanini (Argentina)** in relation to the book *“Disability, Intersectional Agency and Latinx Identity. Theorizing LatDisCrit Counterstorie”* by Alexis Padilla edited in 2022 by Routledge Taylor & Francis Group. The second of them is entitled **“Neocolonizations of the 21st century: bodies/emotions in digital capitalism”** by **Melina Amao (Mexico)** on the recent publication by Adrián Scribano entitled *“Colonization of the Inner Planet 21st Century Social Theory from the Politics of Sensibilities”* also from Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

To conclude, we thank the authors and all those who have sent us their manuscripts. We remind you that the call for articles is permanently open.

We must reiterate that from issue 15 of RELACES we began to publish up to two articles in English per issue. As we have been reiterating for some time: at RELACES, its entire Editorial Team, and the Editorial Board as a whole, we believe it is necessary to take up each article in our journal as a node that allows us to continue the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social and policy to achieve a freer and more autonomous society. It is in the above context that we want to thank all those who trust us as a vehicle to initiate such dialogue.

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