

Bodies without Borders: From Intervention to Intervening-Oneself

Por Andrea Dettano and Aldana Boragnio

The verb “to intervene” comes from the Latin ‘*intervenire*’ –“come in between”– and etymologically means “to interpose oneself between two or more things.” An Internet search reveals several meanings of the term: to participate in an event in a meddling way, to act as a mediator in a conflict, the inspection of processes so they are carried out within legality, and the temporal taking over of the control and administration of an organization in the middle of a conflict situation. At the same time, interventions may refer to different spheres: there can be State interventions, but also educational, economical, surgical interventions, among others. In this issue, number 27 of RELACES, titled “Bodies without borders: From Intervention to Intervening-Oneself,” we approach the different ways in which bodies become the targets of the interventions of others and of themselves, revealing how the social breaches the views of others and the ways we view ourselves, mobilizing practices and “coming in between” our bodies and the bodies of others.

By thinking “the social” as the way in which we are mutually involved, we may then ask what *is not* subject to the logic of intervention –if we recognize that one of the meanings of the term ‘intervention’ is, simply, to participate in an event. According to Weber (2014), social actions is subjectively meaningful and reciprocal, therefore to think the social is to think of that which is mutually referred, and in which the different ways of intervention of subjects over the others are part of everyday life and, as reflected in this issue of our journal, inscribed in what seems to be most defining for the subjects: bodies/emotions.

With emerging modernity, according to Elías (2009:450), “the battlefield turns inwards,” and the twenty-first century exhibits its own forms of regulation of bodies. Thus, we need to enquire about the intervention upon those bodies and the ways in which the organic, intimate, erotic, and everyday life appears as presented “in the inside.” In this sense, we cannot overlook the need to enquire and research

about the ways in which interventions are enacted: the logics of power and domination at play, what is intervened, who intervenes, and over whom.

Without losing sight of the global context, in which the interventions of the State are less and less temporary and become part of the everyday life of millions of people, we should ask about the naturalized character of “being intervened” and its implications on the modes of social structuration. In this sense, the current issue is a special invitation to think about the modes in which bodies/emotions are intervened, and their strategies of self-intervention: The intervention of the masculine on the feminine; medicalization as a form of acting on the bodies; media’s intervention on subjectivity; sociology; the everyday life; subjects intervening their bodies striving to regulate energies, stress and exhaustion; and eating as a form of having an impact on health/illness.

This number opens with the article “Medicalized lives: from medical gaze to an analgesic life,” by Mario Millones Hurtado (Chile). He writes about the advance of medicalization in social life and arrives at a concept of “analgesic life”. The article accounts for the extension of diagnoses to groups that were not diagnosed before, the medicalization of illnesses that use to go without medication, and the consumption of medical prescription to improve the performance of the body. These phenomena have implied a strong commodification of health, and an increase in the responsibility of the patients, now turned into clients.

Analgesia runs through life, it implies a reflexive gaze: to touch oneself, and to perform a self-diagnosis, which will lead to solutions. A fast exits from unpleasant situations is a very important trait of analgesic life. Pain and discomfort are rapidly removed, seeking a life without interruptions. This trait, according to the author, goes beyond the intake of medicines and also includes the avoidance of discomfort. Thus, to attend an after office, yoga or crossfit classes are, from an analgesic perspective,

practices to balance energies, revitalize, reduce stress and achieve a self-induced immediate solution to everyday life issues and their effects on the body.

The second article in this issue, titled “Cancer of stomach-pancreas. In defense of life against the culture of competition,” is by Carlos Geovanni Varela Vega (México). The author focuses on malign stomach and pancreas tumors that are usually hard to diagnose and have few treatment alternatives. Varela Vega enquires into the interpretative-explicative axis to approach the role emotions play in the genesis of these illnesses, problematizing the organic-emotional relations of the body. He approaches illness as “construction processes by the subjects in a specific time and geography” in connection to the cultural, environmental, social, and family context. At the same time, the author also concentrates in the ways subjects enact and conjoin their life conditions with the processes of everyday selections of manners of living and dying.

In the next article, “Border erotization and migration in Chile,” Genoveva Echeverría Gálvez (México) considers the everyday life of south-south migrants. She proposes a theoretical reflection constructing a notion of “border erotization,” based on the experiences of migrants with their own bodies, the bodies of others, and the everyday management of multicultural coexistence. The author reveals the racialization and erotization elements installed in the bodies of migrants situated in a space defined as abject. She also searches for other forms of understanding these migrants beyond otherness and victimization, and which include the ethnic, feminine, and black, as desiring sensitivities, not homogeneous and open to possibilities.

Andrea García Hernández and Enrique Hernández García Rebollo (México) are the authors of the article “Childhood is Destiny” in which they stress the “high degree of erotization to which children are subjected through socio-cultural products, such as television shows.” The text reveals the modes of identification proposed by mass media of children as small consumers, *adultifying* them while at the same time infantilizing adults. Thus, from a psychoanalytic approach, the authors engage mass media as a consumption social practice that presents itself as mere “entertainment”, but having a great impact in the intervention on children’s subjective processes.

The fifth article in this issue, “Topology, domination and subjectivity. Power theories of Michel Foucault and Norbert Elias. A comparative perspective” is by Julián Zicari (Argentina). The author starts by defining the notion of typology in order to understand territories and spaces as relations of

forces, zones of agreements and conflicts, where dispositions such as “those at the top” and “those underneath” are not established in neutral ways but through constructed topographies. From a revision of the works of Norbert Elías and Michel Foucault, Zicari rethinks the problematic of power using two differentiated topologic keys: first, the civilization process is deployed into the individuals, from the manners of court society, placing Elías’ notion as ordered from “up”, into the inside. Foucault’s proposal, on the other hand, corresponds to a topology underneath-outside. The emotivity of the subjects always implies resistance and conflict in relation to an “outside” which cannot be reduced to a relation dominant-dominated, but that resides in the intervention of what is established as evident and natural.

The next article is “From the rural to everyday life: The Brazilian Sociology of José de Souza Martins” by William Héctor Gómez Soto (Brazil). The author recounts the work of Martins, one of the renovators of Brazilian sociology. Martins emphasized the importance of historical and empirical research to study, not only social tensions and conflicts, but also new social subjects, creativity, and people’s imaginaries. Taking up Marx’s influence and a critical dialogue with Lefebvre, the author reminds us what is essential in the sociology of José de Souza Martins, who researched that which is at the margins, the limits which sometimes seem “unimportant”, such as the body in its irrefutable quality, making it a new object of study for sociology.

In “Who Possesses ‘Possessed Women’? Women and Female Bodies as Territories for Male Interference” by Ana González Ramos, Begonya Enguix, and Beatriz Revelles-Benavente (Spain), the authors reveal how art (through cinema,) religion (through exorcism rituals,) and science (through psychiatry and neurology,) have perpetuated gender dualisms, hiding the multiple and the complex subjectivity of women. Thus, the feminine body’s changes and mutations are interpreted as a loss of control requiring male intervention which “saves” those bodies by restoring the threatened male order. Patriarchal order reduces the complexity and multiplicity of the image of the feminine to only one image, defined by kindness and beauty. Therefore the authors construct a category of “women in movement,” subverting the dualist modes of thinking and representation of the feminine body.

This issue closes with two book reviews. In the first, “Politics, Nation State, and Globalization: new challenges, old problems,” Maximiliano Korstanje (Argentina), surveys Bandeira, J. M. y Monteiro, J. P. (2017) Internationalism, Imperialism and the

Formation of the Contemporary World. New York: Springer. This book explains Imperialism appealing to the “discursivity of internationalism, as something more complex than a disciplinary mechanism,” suggesting a state of prosperity and freedom that later mutates into coercion.

The second book review, by Andrea Dettano (Argentina), is “Postcards of the Twenty-First Century: Bodies/emotions as an axis of analysis.” It deals with Adrián Scribano’s book “Politics and emotions” (2018), published by Studium Press LLC. According to Dettano, this book represents an important attempt to denaturalize the contexts and processes that articulate the twenty-first century, developing the specificities and trends that have consolidated emotions as intertwined with fear, distance, and consumption as elements that structure of “the social”.

We thank the authors and all those who have sent us their manuscripts. We would like to remind you that we are permanently receiving submissions for publication.

Finally, we would like to restate that as from the 15th issue of RELACES we are publishing up to two articles in English per issue. As we have been stating for some time, all of RELACES’ editorial team and editorial council believe it is necessary to take each one of our articles as a node that allows us to continue in the path of dialogue and scientific/academic exchange as a social and political task in order to attain a freer and more autonomous society. Therefore, we would like to thank all those who see us as a vehicle to open the aforementioned dialogue.

References

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