

Estados mórbidos. Desgaste corporal en la vida contemporánea,

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Kaótica Libros, 2022, 347 pp.

ISBN: 978-84-124055-9-0

Estados Mórbidos. Desgaste Corporal en la Vida Contemporánea (Morbid States. Corporal Wear and Tear in Contemporary Life) (2022) is a feminist ethnography on the Central Sensitization Syndrome (CSS) — a disruption of nerve centres which causes chronic diseases such as fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue (p. 87). Méndez de la Brena takes distance from the hegemonic medical approach, and embraces an anthropological and gender perspective to investigate the handling of the diseases, unravelling new forms of resistance. The book can be briefly defined as: “a necro-political analysis of the disease in its material existence and of the production of knowledge and practices of resistance of women in a neoliberal context” (p. 33). Méndez de la Brena coins the concept of *estados mórbidos* (morbid states), which is constructed around two levels of interpretation. On the one hand, morbid states incorporate the regimes of self-precarization and self-responsibility for the disease as an individual state (lowercase morbid states). On the other hand, the necro-administration and necro-exploitation of the disease through violent structures of the State perpetuate the expression of it (uppercase Morbid States) (p. 119). The concept therefore refers to a series of capitalistic and necro-political practices that obliges people to be productive and as if they were in a death-state.

These *estados mórbidos* are criticized through three macro-areas throughout the chapters: productivity, efficiency and temporality. The analysis of these power structures ends up revealing counter-narratives, forms of resistance, and knowledges such as *saberes-haceres experienciales* (experiential know-how), which are what the author calls *artes de vivir con un cuerpo dolorido* (arts of living with an aching body): resting and taking breaks from work, stopping, refusing to take medicines. In other words, living as one can live.

This new art of living also brings with it new configurations at a spatial and family level: for example, staircases are re-read as points of rest from pain and not of movement, water becomes something painful that needs to be circumvented, even loved ones become a conduit of discomfort or relief, and cure is more an obligation than a choice.

Estados mórbidos is an ambitious book, the result of a three-year doctoral work at the University of Granada, Spain. Méndez de la Brena grounds her arguments in Donna Haraway’s speculative methodology, based on science fiction, speculative fiction and

speculative fabulation (p. 44). This methodology is interwoven with approaches and methods from disability studies (Santiago López Petit, Clara Valverde), post-colonial theory (Achille Mbembe), gender and women's studies (Silvia Federici), queer theory (Sara Ahmed, Paul Preciado), cultural studies (Michel Foucault), and crip studies (Mary Elizabeth Johnson), upon which the author develops her own concepts: *resistencias tangenciales*, (tangential resistances), *tirar p' delante* (go forward), *echar p' atrás* (back out) and *vivir a destiempo* (live out of time).

The speculative methodology also applies to her practical approach, which is the result of a two-year fieldwork in the province of Granada, Spain, with nine women suffering from CSS: Agostina, Blanca, Daniela, Ernesta, Gloria, Hilda, Lola, Mariana and Soila. The author uses the photovoice technique, which consists in taking photographs with an analog camera, and having later a conversation to reflect upon them. This creates a new time for speculation, as well as new languages and representations of pain that go beyond the hegemonic narrative (pp. 50-52).

In terms of structure and organisation of the book, it opens with a prologue by theorist Sayak Valencia, who lingers on the author's courage to critically inquire how to survive in the neoliberal world with a wounded body.

The first chapter introduces the key notions and the methodological issues.

The second chapter of the book reflects upon the capitalist modes of production which reward functioning and productive bodies and exclude unproductive sick bodies. Women's bodies with fibromyalgia are: "trapped in metaphors of uselessness that have an impact on the management of their lives, forcing them into more movement and action" (p. 31).

The third chapter of the book focuses on the impact of efficiency on women with fibromyalgia. Efficiency is sustained by hegemonic knowledge structures that implant a medical understanding of the disease that derives from an expert knowledge that delimits the abilities of a sick body. The term 'art of living with a body in pain' is introduced here: women's experiences gestated in the body in pain and a different perception of space.

The fourth chapter takes a deep look at the concept of temporality by asking if the temporality of bodies in pain could be interpreted beyond the oppressive explanations and impositions of neoliberal time. The concept *vivir a destiempo* (live out of time) emerges from Soila's photographic reflections. In this sense, living out of time is a dissident temporality that transgresses the markers of normative time through rest and temporary interruptions.

In the final chapter of the book, the author concludes that necro-political and capitalist structures make women sick. The neoliberalist state wants aching women to be productive, effective and time-managing. Instead, these nine women, through their shots, reflections and experiential know-how show new connections to nature, family, care and resistance.

Finally, the volume ends with a praising and methodological epilogue by Melania Morisco.

On the one hand, *Estados mórbidos* provides a strong and innovative theoretical-methodological apparatus that will surely interest scholars and academics. On the other hand, the book offers glimpses of daily life, images and reflections that come directly from the interviewed women. Another innovation comes from the inclusion of a QR code that leads to a photo-booklet, *Arte de vivir en un cuerpo dolorido (The Art of Living with an Aching Body)*, a collection of women's stories and photographs, accessible from all levels of education and available for multiple uses. These academic choices reveal Méndez de la Brena's political purpose: to put women and disability at the centre of the discourse and in a new light.

To conclude, *Estados mórbidos* is an essential book for students and scholars who want to approach new perspectives and methodologies in disabilities and women studies. I highly recommend it for its academic and methodological as well as political and gender innovation. I am looking forward to the English translation, which will surely bring new insights and new publications to the international academic debate around the topic.

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Recibido el 8 de marzo de 2024

Aceptado el 22 de abril de 2024