

Telenovelas and the issue of classed femininity*

Telenovelas e a questão da feminilidade de classe

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ABSTRACT

This article theoretically discusses the concept of social class to understand the construction of heteronormative femininity in studies on the social uses of telenovelas. Inspired by the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Latin American cultural studies, and feminist theory, I argue for the centrality of the bodily hexis in conforming a classed femininity based on the incorporation of media capital by working-class women. The analysis reveals that the automatisms of schemes of classification are powerful mechanisms of reproduction of both gender and social injustice.

Keywords: Social uses, telenovelas, classed femininity

RESUMO

O texto discute teoricamente a pertinência da noção de classe social para o entendimento da construção de uma feminilidade heteronormativa nos estudos dos usos sociais das telenovelas. Inspirado no trabalho de Pierre Bourdieu, nos estudos culturais latino-americanos e na teoria feminista, argumenta sobre a centralidade da hexis corporal para a conformação de uma feminilidade de classe baseada na incorporação de um capital midiático por mulheres de classe popular. A perspectiva de análise revela que os automatismos das classificações são poderosos mecanismos de reprodução da injustiça social e de gênero.

Palavras-chave: Usos sociais, telenovelas, feminilidade de classe

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INTRODUCTION

IDEALS OF FEMININITY are socially disseminated and circulate in the media (print, audiovisual, and digital), being adopted by women from different classes. However, they are still scarcely studied in terms of everyday uses, a sphere in which an approach from the perspective of reception is considerably helpful. The reception study proposed here is focused on individual sociological portraits that are then coupled with an anthropological description from the point of view of the actors and of the theory of mediation¹. Its contribution lies in the analysis of the incorporation of emergent values and of the struggle for maintaining those residues from the past, which cultural changes (Williams, 1980) have brought into common people's everyday lives. The political strategies that shape the existence of the masses are examined in what I define as a *reception study*, insofar as subjective and cultural identities of the audience are made up of processes structuring not only society, but also social actors.

The preoccupation with social class, gender, and the media is not exclusively motivated by the emergence of studies on the topic of gender within the field of Communication in Brazil (Escosteguy, 2008; 2012) but also by the persisting class and gender inequalities in the country on top of the ambiguous sexism on television and telenovelas (Moreno, 2013; Almeida, 2013). Specifically in reference to heteronormativity, there seems to be a hypersexualisation of the female figure. Moreover, if the hypothesis of the reconfiguration of the modes of exhibition of the body towards a strong display of sensuality might be endorsed, it is ultimately up to reception/consumption studies to gauge the uses of these body images produced by the media.

In opposition to the idea that social class has lost validity in efforts to understand cultural phenomena, in a society of hyperconsumption (Lipovetsky, 2007), the acquisition and use of symbolic goods by consumers point to class appropriation. In reference to the working-class audience, which manifests as misidentification with their own class, as shame of seeming *poor*, and as the perception of social inequalities in an emotional/achy as well as critical fashion: i.e., by means of reactions of resentment and inconformity to the uneven chances to which poor and assisted people are submitted (Ronsini, 2008; 2012).

Accordingly, this article adds to my continued interest in studying the relation among social class, media consumption, and the reception of telenovelas (1995; 2004; 2012) within an ongoing research project whose empirical topic is the use of melodrama in producing a classed femininity by women from both the ruling and the working classes. If the incorporation of telenovela narratives in the formation of media cultural capital of heterosexual women

1. Research project entitled "Learning to be a 'classy lady' from telenovelas" was awarded funding by CNPq process number 014/2012.

from the elite endorses their lifestyle, the hypothesis about female receptors from the working class is that such an incorporation constitutes a symbolic capital that, all at once, legitimizes and delegitimizes the way of being of the class to which they belong. On the one hand, they ratify hegemonic models of femininity based on a slim body, a certain way of speaking and behaving in public, elegant attire, and the bourgeois appreciation of gravity and modesty. On the other, however, they celebrate another mode of social presentation, an aesthetic standard that celebrates sensuality and exceeds bourgeois moral conventions associated to its ways of being.

Phenomena related to personal presentation assume a crucial role in terms of symbolic capital of social actors in an age when expressing a corporified lifestyle (i.e., made bodily) is central for economic ascension, for social recognition, and for affective realization. Self-presentation as a way of displaying self-worth (Skeggs, 2004b) is an investment made by both men and women. However, women and the working class use attributes that do not historically belong to them — as pointed out by sociologist Beverly Skeggs (2014) —, defined, rather, precisely by the lack of material means (property) and intellectual faculties (rationality).

The media are vital for the definition of femininity and for the conformity of gender relations as they exploit the female body to sell products, define beauty and elegance standards and disseminate ideas of moral respectability in terms of sexuality and family care. The particularity of Brazilian telenovelas is that they give way, in the thresholds of its ruling discourse, to the defense of sexual freedom and of multiple sexualities, of respecting gender differences; to pressing charges in cases of domestic violence, of human trafficking by international prostitution networks, amongst other issues that involve women's rights.

Media consumption in general and the reception of telenovelas in particular take part in the process by which women from the working class reflect upon gender and class relations. Either having or not socially ascended (sideways to another stratum of the working class or upwards to the highly desired middle class), they fight to live with dignity so as to avoid feeling the utmost moral violence, which is being “ashamed of themselves” (Bourdieu, 2006: 95).

Therefore, understanding gender relations bespeaks not only the dissemination of the androcentric point of view amongst and by women, but also the struggle of common women who, in their consumption practices, oppose certain values and imagine a new way of living their own existence with a certain degree of autonomy. That is what I call *resistance*, the reflection upon a socioeconomic and gender condition that is not political per se — at least, not in the traditional sense of partaking in the political struggle of social mo-

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2. According to Charles Taylor (1996: 29), a life in which we deserve respect and appreciation from others and which is linked to effective rights that individuals must possess in a democratic political system.

vements, parties, workers' unions, and associations — but that might make a difference towards a dignified ordinary life². A “tactical” resistance (Certeau, 1994: 100-101) from those who cannot wait for the ideal conditions of social transformation.

In the first part of this theoretical essay, I argue for the importance of the division into social classes for the comprehension of the production of a classed femininity (ways of thinking, acting, feeling, and appreciating) based on symbolic and cultural capital, constituted by class position and by the reception/consumption of melodrama. I, furthermore, parse out the methodological design of the reception study from which this piece originates. In the second part, I expatiate on the adequacy of Bourdieu's theory of social classes for thinking gender dispositions. Finally, in the third part, I expatiate on the constitution of classed femininity and bodily hexis. To conclude, I articulate theory and partial analysis of empirical data in exploring the relation between class, gender, and TV fiction.

THE SOCIAL USES OF TELENOVELA AND CLASSED FEMININITY

Contemporary socialization determines that our schemes of perception be organized by means of narratives diffused by the media, which, for most people in Brazil, especially those from the working class, means audiovisual culture rather than *literacy*, i.e., high culture. Here lies the contrast between culture based on books, newspapers, and print magazines against electronic texts and hypertexts — in other words, a contrast between culture based on reading and culture based on *browsing* (Martín-Barbero, 2014).

According to data from the first issue of *Pesquisa brasileira de mídia* (2014) on the uses that Brazilians claim to make of the media, television is still the vehicle with the highest penetration into Brazilian households. No fewer than 97% of interviewees watch TV, 61% have the habit of listening to the radio, and 47% browse the internet. Reading newspapers and print magazines is less frequent and reaches, respectively, 25% and 15% of interviewees. This pattern in answers is confirmed when interviewees point to their favorite means of communication: television (76.4%). Other media chosen were the internet (13.1%), radio (7.9%), print newspapers (1.5%), and magazines (0.3%), whereas all other answers came up to 0.8%. Therefore, audiovisual culture — that, mostly, of the television and the internet — compose a cultural capital that competes with that transmitted by the family and the school or, rather, reinforce it.

Studying the consumption and reception of telenovelas unveils those representations of the social world which are constituted by the mediations of

sociability (social relations modelled within different social fields), rituality (ways of seeing and reading), technicity (discourse as perceptive organizer), and institutionality (the productions of worldviews based on the logic of the market). Representations and practices of consumption/reception — captured by the testimonials of receptors and by the observation of consumption rituals — constitute a media cultural capital, acquired within the history of loyalty that these women cultivate to media celebrities: characters on telenovelas, journalists, fashion celebrities, musicians, TV hosts etc.

The Latin American strand of the social uses of media argues for the study of the relations between society and technological means of communication as a matter of culture — i.e., as production, regulation, circulation, and consumption of symbolic objects. I have been arguing, however, that the wide span of such approach in reception studies refers to the investigation of concrete practices of consumption and their meaning in everyday life. Even when filtered through the circuit of culture, the debate on gender and class inequalities in reception studies is difficult, as it requires a theoretical and methodological protocol that would take social and cultural processes that involve those relations between media and audiences.

One of the main functions of cultural analysis from the perspective of mediations is the understanding of hegemonic process as not deriving strictly from political and economic power exercised by the dominant sectors of society but, rather, from the texture of distinct diachronic modes of experiencing time and space. Research on reception focuses on the power of the sphere of production as it acts at the moment of circulating its products, examines the meaning that has been reconfigured by consumers' own appropriation and, then, attempts to reach a certain level of generality from those micro-scale observations which are theoretically reassembled in an inclusive interpretive analysis.

My epistemological strand here is what I call Critical Reception Studies (Ronsini, 2014), whose methods are participant observation and case studies built upon 12 individual sociological profiles (Lahire, 2004) reconstructing personal, family, school, and professional trajectories of informants so as to understand their gender dispositions articulated by their class position. Lahire's dispositional sociology, as a method focused on biographical accounts, according to Steph Lawler's genealogy (2014), goes back to the 19th century, with William Dilthey, into the 20th century, with the Chicago School, and reaches sociologists' recent interest in personal narratives for enquiring the production of identities.

The meaning of the consumption of media and cultural goods in the constitution of the experience of class and gender is seen, by the reception analyst,

through the interpretations that receptors make of representations (Freire Filho, 2005) generated by the media. Their concreteness originates from the socialization of individuals within institutions — e.g., family, school — but whose logics are obviously constituted by wide structures of power, such as the state and the market. Adopting the socio-anthropological perspective means researching people's interactions with the media without restricting them to performances of individual actors.

Unlike Bourdieu's focus on social prestige stemming from the expression of a lifestyle based on possession and use of material goods, I focus on the positive or negative valuation of self (a key aspect of personal identity) in women's accounts on the feminine condition. That, in turn, generates objective data on capitals to describe a social position (class), from which it is possible to note the ways in which women define what it is to be a *classy* woman.

It is, in fact, the symbolic capital of women from the working class, which is either adjusted or maladjusted to gender dispositions, circumscribed by dispositions related to body care and appearance and the association of these with sexual morality and behavior. Symbolic capital translates into the appraisal, either positive or negative, of body care and physical attributes, which are taken to be signs for evaluating femininity: a slim or *curvy* body, hair, nails, skin, makeup, high heels etc. From the point of view of the social actor, adjustment to such a socially expected standard of femininity, amongst other consequences, limits her autonomy, transforming her into a being for the Other, thus enabling it for competition both in the matrimonial 'market' as well as in the job market. On the other hand, maladjustment to dispositions related to body care and physical appearance, beyond causing social sanctions, means empowerment insofar as not complying with the standard means freedom to act as a human being rather than as *a woman*.

On the one hand, media images commonly portray women from the upper class as *chic*, elegant, and as *peruas*³, exuberant or luxurious. On the other, representations of women from the working class oscillate within a spectrum similar to that of the upper class, in which the image of a humble woman (the equivalent to the elegant woman from the upper class) is set against the image of the woman who invests in her appearance, composing a style usually seen as tacky. Attire, good/bad taste and social etiquette are associated with behaviors considered as either morally acceptable or unacceptable in the private sphere of life and in public spaces.

Conventional modalities of representing poverty on telenovelas (Ronsini, 2012) come in a mix of dominant and negotiated codifications, which I define as hegemonic representations since they partially cater to the demands of the

3. The word *perua* literally means a hen, a female turkey. It is used to the effect of fancy or posh.

ruling class. Oppositional codifications are an exception. It thus seems clear that economic interests of the market are a crucial part to explain these codifications⁴, be they dominant, negotiated, or oppositional. In late capitalism, products are adaptations to differences and to the bourgeois ideal of authenticity, which is always reinventing itself. Telenovelas sell products to female audiences and they need to convey representations that comply with the announcers' interests. The construction of female characters in terms of costumes, etiquette, and behavior include the gravity of the older elegant woman from the upper class (*chic*), the irreverence of young women from the same class, the moderate style of women from the middle class as well as, usually in a humorous tone, the luxury of the *perua* from the upper class and the hypersexuality of *piriguetes*⁵.

According to Almeida (2013), the images of women conveyed by telenovelas reproduce traditional ideals of maternity and spousal love as the *modern* notion of the woman who works but also has time to invest in body and beauty care besides managing the household without needing to share chores. Other ethnographic investigations into working class women's reception of telenovelas highlight that, for them, regardless of the generation, work does not have the same importance as family, whereas maternity is the inseparable basis of the feminine identity (Sifuentes; Ronsini, 2011; Silva; Ronsini, 2012; Wöttrich; Ronsini, 2012). Female viewers defend the same ideal of the *strong* woman from telenovelas and, like them, do not claim equal conditions in relation to their partners.

Thus, to comply with the market's imperatives and to captivate audiences, the ideal models of womanhood — in terms of sexuality, behavior in public and private spaces, as well as body standards — must minimally respond to the transformations that have positively affected gender in terms of equality, at least in terms of the substantial increase in the number of women in the job market and the growing levels of education amongst them. This media model that conforms female subjectivity is greatly centered on the exhibition of the female body, the docile body fit to the fashion and cosmetics industry, i.e., the sensual body that takes pleasure from being exhibited.

The role of telenovelas is deemed crucial in the conformation to beauty ideals on the part of working-class women (Jordão, 2009). Trends seen on telenovelas are confronted or confirmed by trends on the streets and consumption is directed at cheaper products with the same design as those shown on TV.

SOCIAL CLASS AND GENDER DISPOSITIONS

Bourdieu's work reflects on symbolic struggles, which involve class struggle, such as that around values of legitimate classification of those who are

4. Codification is the process by which more-or-less stable meanings are produced in a text/narrative/discourse.

5. A Brazilian slang close to *hoochie* in the US or *tart* in the UK. The term *piriguete* "has been used (in pop music, the media, and informal conversations) to define a woman who does not fit the traditional standards of feminine behavior either because she has too many sexual partners or because she acts and dresses in a way that is deemed provocative" (Cerqueira; Corrêa; Rosa, 2012: 134).

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deemed morally *apt* to face up to competition for scarce resources or to actually compete for resources — more or less abundant — as well as the way in which to use them in a different manner and, thus, everyone tries to boost their symbolic capital. The valuation of consumption in a society that has deepened inequality, creating the aristocracy of the very wealthy, the impoverishment of the middle class, and significant poverty indexes, sets new challenges to thinking distinction.

One of the strongest elements in the legacy of his sociology of reproduction is the strengthening of the interrelation between individual experience, representations, and subjectivities without relinquishing objective properties that define individuals and position them in the social structure. Their position in the social space defines their point of view, but that does not imply reducing them to the position they occupy because individuals have representations of such a world and position. Objectivist epistemology (Bourdieu; Chartier, 2011) consists in exploring this dual reality, both sides being objective: positions and representation. It leads to the concepts of field⁶, capital, and habitus (Bourdieu, 2008). Habitus, an “individual or socialized biological body” (Bourdieu, 1999: 206), is the result of embedded dispositions and, at the same time, a generator of manifestations which are expressed individually. Social position and class disposition do not always perfectly overlap because dispositions can be incoherent according to crises or to the stability of the current status, according to the disagreement in relation to the collective expectations of a social group or of “becoming aware” (Bourdieu, 1999).

Based on a partial scrutiny of research data, I argue, regarding gender dispositions — those ruling everyday practices and the perception/valuation of a classed femininity —, that there is a mismatch between such dispositions and the social position of women from different working class fractions. They might actually reject the negative gender representations associated with their class position, criticizing women’s vulgarity in the everyday life and in female characters on telenovelas, thus showing signs of anxiety in relation to the ideals of bourgeois elegance and solemnity. However, even when negative associations are detected in terms of appearance, manners, and sexual behavior, these women might, in turn, recognize as their own ideas of a spontaneous and unpretentious grace of a simple and sober femininity in relation to those sophisticated standards of apparatuses working for the bourgeois feminine distinction.

Tantamount to the unconscious aspects of domination, I consider appropriate the use of a concept of ideology that takes into account those ideological mechanisms of imbue ment transmitted by family, school, and media education. If there is a practical transmission of subjective and objective class (and

6. “Field” is a more dynamic concept than “social structure” because it is characterized by tensions in power within and without it. A set of fields makes a given social structure.

gender) dispositions, just as an athlete learns to swim by incorporating rules into an automatic mode, so a part of the process involves being instructed to reproduce movements and such learning stage also exists as consciousness and not simply as an automatized action. A certain degree of reflexivity must, therefore, be taken into account when looking into such practices as reflexivity, as I have been able to notice from working with the working class for over 20 years, is not an exclusive property of the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie, even amongst women from the working class, who face a double submission: to class and to gender.

Enhancements experienced by women from the elite and the middle class in terms of well-being in the workplace and in their private lives do not straightforwardly impact women from the working class in the same proportion or with the same emphasis. In the peripheries of capitalism, such as Brazil, nonetheless, class inequality acquires more perverse nuances for, whilst in relation to the secondary habitus — that which generates inequalities based on stylization and distinction —, there seem to be no differences between capitalist countries, in the peripheral society a precarious habitus manifests because part of the population does not have the means to acquire the primary habitus (Souza, 2006)⁷.

According to Souza (2006), if the habitus is the incorporation, by subjects, of schemes of evaluation and disposition of behavior based on a structural socioeconomic situation, the structure of peripheral societies causes changes in the sort of habitus for all social classes. Thus, in peripheral countries, there are the secondary habitus, the precarious habitus, and the primary habitus, which is not homogeneously assimilated by the ruled classes, hindering those more impoverished sectors from becoming producers, apt for work in a competitive society.

This discussion assists in defining the working class based on the composition of capital conformation to the habitus. Economic capital — defined by the occupation of the best-positioned family member — is the starting point for understanding the cultural and social capital of working-class women. By combining Bourdieu's theory of reproduction, Jessé Souza's reflections on class inequalities in Brazil, and Santos' (2002) and Quadros and Antunes' (2001) occupational criteria, I have classified the 12 working-class informants into two fractions, namely: lower middle class and lower class. The lower fraction of the working class is what Jessé Souza daringly calls "the rabble", or the very poor, or yet the "disenfranchised" (Santos, 2009), the equivalent to the 'excluded' or the 'underclass' in the anglophone tradition (Welshmann, 2013). All of this refers to a reality characterized by unemployment or precarious work in manual labor that does not require qualification, by the impossibility

7. Such categories, however, do not account for the whole phenomenon of stylization via consumption within those strata that are defined by their primary and precarious habitus due to the fact that material living conditions of the working class do not hinder the occurrence of the stylization and distinction via consumption as has been noted by anthropological studies (Barros; Rocha, 2009).

of economic planning in the medium or long term, by low levels of formal education or even functional illiteracy, by poor access to regular healthcare, by precarious housing conditions, by instability in family relations etc.

Looking into the informants' trajectories leads to the need of linking the concept of social class not only to the system of economic exploitations but also to the evaluation of personal value that is, at the same time, the valuation or devaluation of the personal value of others. And the devaluation of working-class women in the ruling symbolic economy is double for they are women and workers. A decisive part of class and gender classification is elaborated based on cultural characteristics that are expressed in the body (hexis); not only marks that manifest in walking, dressing, speaking but also physical signs that life experience imprints on the body: hands, eyes, a tired mien, a general 'wear and tear' of the body due to labor work.

A CLASS FEMALE BODY

As Skeggs states, gender and class are inseparable because women "do not see themselves just as women but as women through their class" (2002: 91). Femininity is a property of women from the middle and upper classes who define what is respectable in terms of appearance and behavior (Skeggs, 2002). The constitution of the female body happens in various ways, individually or by the conjunctions of the following processes: a rite of passage into adulthood, the adoption of a particular aesthetics, the way in which one's social and economic status is announced, a way of competing against other women for jobs or men, or an opportunity for indulgent narcissism (Bartky, 2003).

In one of the volumes of her *The Second Sex* trilogy dedicated to studying the feminine condition, Simone de Beauvoir (1980) highlights how education precociously drives women to feel afraid and not take risks, whereas the boy is encouraged to act bravely and boldly. Teaching a certain feminine modesty in gestuality and in ways of using the body, wearing a certain type of attire — made of garments and accessories — that hinder movement is an early rehearsal for submission in adult life: in the workplace, in the family, in leisure time, in politics, and in all spheres of human action.

Body schemata taught to men and women are, therefore, constitutive of their perception of the world and the place they occupy in it. In expatiating on the subjection of the female body to capitalist relations of production and of male domination, Beauvoir did for gender what Marx did for a class entity, showing how capital acts in the flesh itself of workers. Adelman and Ruggi (2013) synthesized centuries of tradition in sociological research

about the body, from classic authors such as Marcel Mauss, Norbert Elias, and Michel Foucault, who were dedicated to comprehending the techniques for controlling the body, to more contemporary feminist gender theories. In this large outlook, they observe that part of feminist thought resumes Beauvoir's arguments on human nature, shaped by culture and tripartite — corporeal, rational, and emotional —, thus contradicting the modern assumption between body and mind, reason and emotion that has always benefitted male power.

If we take into account class distinctions, there is a series of negative associations with the working-class female body, symbolizing lack of control of a primitive self as opposed to a bourgeois self, guided by rationality. In the construction of representations of the working class and of working-class women, in particular, there has been a contraposition, since the 19th century, between the discourse of the realist novel, the newspaper and the lawmakers (Skeggs, 2004a), and the reactive discourse of the working class, whose members have dedicated themselves to producing new ways of representation (Kirk, 2007: 230). In Brazil, there was a similar phenomenon when a working-class press rose in opposition the social reformers and their attempts at demoralizing the poor so as to expel them from those urban areas which were more economically valuable.

In the interaction of working-class women with Brazilian telenovelas, the devaluation of working-class women in the ruling symbolic economy is ambivalent. There is no doubt that the ideal woman is the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois woman, as it has been since the dawn of the industrial society: slender, vigorous, elegant, delicate body, modest in gestures, translating its belonging to the bourgeoisie, whereas the voluptuous and untamed body is represented as inferior (Goellner, 2010).

Brazilian TV fiction does not live only off the exchange value of images of women selling products — nail polish, clothes, accessories, cosmetics, cleaning products, household appliances, food etc. — but also off the use value that these images have for the female audience. These images thus need to suggest values that are minimally acceptable in terms of the working-class women's culture and identity. The comprehension of the symbolic power of classifications takes into consideration recent representations of working-class women as sensual women, young women who are openly proud of their body and of advantages that they take from it in professional and matrimonial markets. Such representations are associated with ideas of glamour, seduction, and success and compete with other representations that are centered on respectability: female characters from the working class are also *hardworking*, dedicated mothers, loyal partners etc.

One of the reasons for telenovelas highly praising aesthetics and popular morals is that class and gender categorizations must obey market's economic orders and then combine them with cultural demands of working-class women, who have, along fifty years, been the most loyal audience of melodrama in all its modernist and romantic modalities. However, the social and cultural mark expressed in the body is the most effective aspect of the symbolic domination of class and gender for it is the most visible and, at the same time, the most concealed of its mechanisms. A classed body bears the physical marks of exploitation, which need to be radically softened for television or shown as the result of unsuccessful choices on the part of those who have no taste or education.

THINKING WITH DATA

The appreciation of the symbolic capital of working-class women is a struggle for respectability in terms of appearance, behavior, and ways of being. Class struggle around moral classifications, however, has a universal character, with specificities of its own depending on the country. My research aims to contribute to the debate on class and gender inequality in Brazil, where working-class women, both white and black, suffer with moral and physical violence. The pain of lacking social recognition, of humiliation and offence runs parallel to the lack of resources, access to healthcare, education, and culture.

Telenovelas have an ambiguous role for working-class women: the hegemony of the economically independent bourgeois woman, who is also a mother and who is sexually fulfilled, competes with stereotypes of the humble and *hardworking*, dedicated mother and the hypersexual woman (*piriguete*). The *femme fatale* of the bourgeoisie upholds her elegance in contrast to the working woman's hypersexuality.

The dichotomy between body/emotion and soul/reason as a basis for gender domination is not fully adopted by the informants who, on the one hand, see gender as stemming from bodily nature and as a biological fate, subjecting themselves to managing the household with little or no collaboration. On the other hand, they recognize themselves positively as the soul and body of the house, as being more capable than men of controlling and rationalizing chores, even those related to providing the necessary resources for supporting the family. That is how the sexual division of labor is converted into symbolic capital.

If the realization of virtues seen as typically feminine depends on the maternal and working body — the body for reproduction, the body for the house and for caring for the Other, for the support of the domestic unit —, the human

virtues of honesty, kindness, and solidarity are a class-based symbolic capital that gives them the feeling of being equal or even better than those who possess cultural and economic capital. This is when the body finds the soul anew.

Analysis focused on understanding consciousness and lack of knowledge of domination, by means of the constitution of a class-based self and body, seems to confirm that the automatisms of classification are powerful mechanisms in the reproduction of social and gender injustice: the lack of cultural and economic capital creates a negative valuation of the self, judged as incapable of speaking, dressing, behaving properly and as a failure for not having been able to acquire consumption goods that would make them socially appreciated women. Notwithstanding, the habitus and the dispositions of working-class women are not merely adjusted to economic conditions and to expressivity — narrative, behavioral, and emotional —, in turn combining pride and shame, honor and respectability, submission and rebellion, emulation and creation. ■

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